

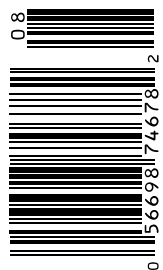
RECLAIMING MARY MAGDALENE

WHY WE NEED TO FREE HER
FROM CENTURIES OF
MYTH AND DISTORTION

faith in action for social justice

U.S. Can.

\$ 4.95



August 2022

sojo.net

Vol. 51 No. 8

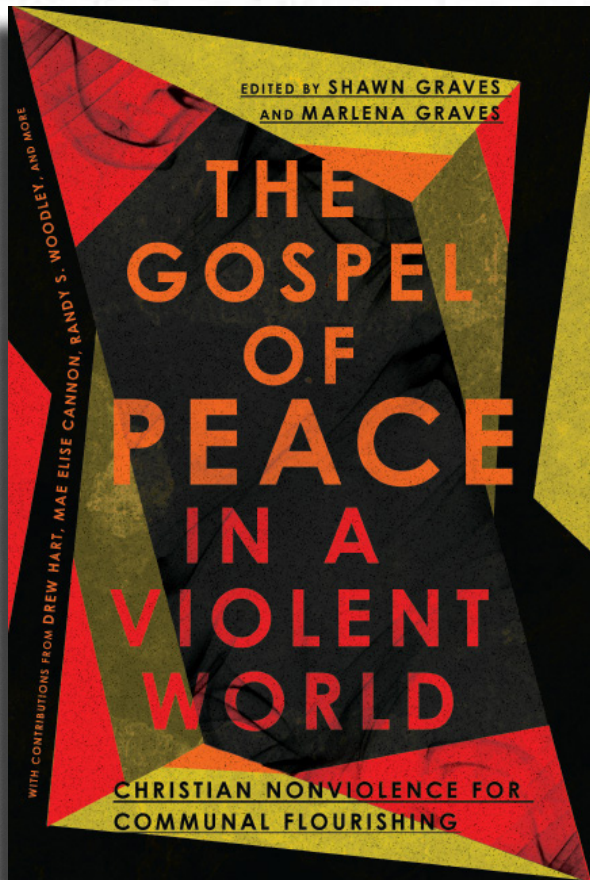
FINDING
COMMON
SACRED GROUND
ON ROE

PAGE 12

'I RAN OUT
OF MASSACRE
SERMONS'

PAGE 20

“BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS.”



The gospel of Jesus Christ is the good news of peace. Gathering contributions from theologians, pastors, and practitioners, this volume casts a vision of Christian nonviolence in today's world, not only responding to the realities of war but also offering a deeper understanding of peace—a holistic shalom.

**EDITED BY SHAWN AND
MARLENA GRAVES**

CONTRIBUTORS:

**RANDY WOODLEY • MICHAEL JIMENEZ
LISA SHARON HARPER • MAE ELISE CANNON
DREW HART • SHEILA WISE ROWE
BALDEMAR VELASQUEZ • KATHY KHANG
AND MORE!**

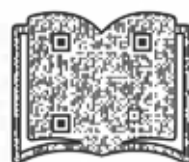
“Nonviolence is often wrongly equated with passivity and inaction. As demonstrated by this diverse and provocative collection of essays, just peacemaking and nonviolent direct action are part of a rich Christian social justice tradition that is now more important than ever.”

—ROBERT CHAO ROMERO, *author of **Brown Church***

“Marlena and Shawn Graves's convicting new volume reveals how our lives are entangled in all kinds of everyday violence. Thankfully, it doesn't leave us there. This book will not only open eyes but also spark imaginations, helping us to discern how a peaceable world—one more faithful to the gospel—might come to be.”

—HEATH CARTER, *associate professor at Princeton Theological Seminary*

**FREE
EXCERPT**



ivp
Academic

“CLOTHES—AND HOW WE PURCHASE, CARE FOR, AND DISCARD THEM—DESERVE THEOLOGICAL ATTENTION.”

The Demon, the Desert, and the Wardrobe

When mountains of discarded clothes end up rotting in a Chilean desert, ‘ecological sin’ can be as near as our closet.

by Céire Kealty



26

22

Reclaiming Mary Magdalene Why we need to free the “apostle to the apostles” from centuries of myth and distortion.

by Kyndall Rae Rothaus

32

‘The Church Must Change Its Thinking about Indigenous People’ An interview with Harry Lafond on what it means to be Cree and Catholic.

by Elaine Enns and Ched Myers

Voices

-
- 6** **Spotlight**
-
- 9** **Grain of Salt**
The problem with military chaplains.
by Jim Rice
-
- Commentary**
- 12** **Abortion**
Seeing Roe v. Wade through Hispanic culture.
by Alexia Salvatierra
- 14** **Capitalism**
Dismantling a political economy that relies on racism. **by Jonathan Tran**
- 15** **Equal Pay**
On the soccer pitch, a small slice of heaven on Earth. **by Kaeley McEvoy**
-
- Columns**
- 16** **Deep Economy**
Is your cash producing carbon? It's time to change your bank. **by Bill McKibben**
- 18** **From the Dust**
Sin isn't just personal.
by Liuan Huska
-
- Eyewitness**
- 20** In Buffalo, 'I had run out of massacre sermons.'
by Julian Armand Cook



46



41

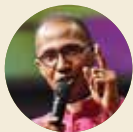
Vision

-
- Culture**
- 39** **Theater**
James Baldwin's most intimate work.
by Jamie McGhee and Adam Hollowell
- 41** **On Film**
In *Men*, there is no safe place.
by Abby Olcese
- 42** **Tell It Slant**
Cracking open our numbness.
by Julie Polter
-
- Reviews**
- 43** **Books**
When Time Is Short is a humble call to live on a properly human scale.
by Ragan Sutterfield
- 44** *Reconsidering Reparations* in light of the "global racial empire." **by Samuel Stephens**
-
- Poetry**
- 46** That's how old our babies would have been.
by James Dewey
-
- Living the Word**
- 48** The world needs our witness.
by T. Denise Anderson
-
- H'rumphs**
- 50** Seize the yachts of the Russian oligarchs, O God. **by Jenna Barnett**

Sojourners magazine (ISSN 0364-2097) is published monthly, except September-October is combined, at 408 C Street NE, Washington, DC 20002. Periodicals Postage Paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. Canadian Publications Sales Agreement #257494. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Sojourners, PO Box 48, Congers, NY 10920-9856.

LIVE A LIFE OF DIVINE NECESSITY

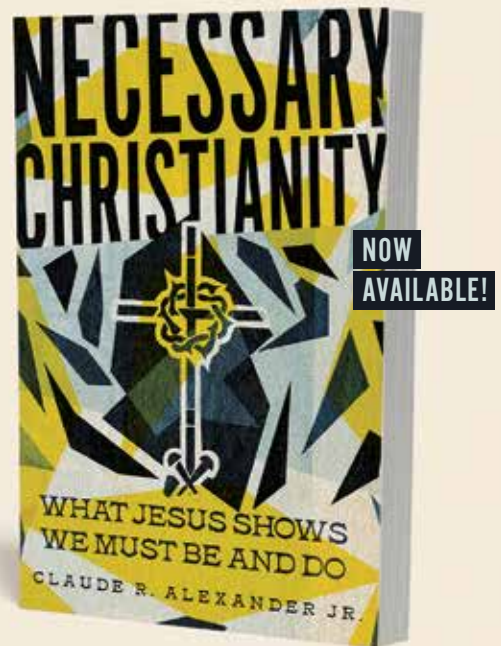
For followers of Jesus, certain things are not optional, but necessary. Bishop Claude Alexander unpacks the Gospels' statements of what Jesus said he must do. Contrary to the life of the optional, accidental, and haphazard, the believer is called to live with a sense of divine necessity—no maybes about it.



BISHOP CLAUDE R. ALEXANDER JR. is senior pastor of The Park Church in Charlotte, North Carolina. He serves on the board of Christianity Today, Mission America Coalition, Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, and Movement.org. He is the chair of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary's board of trustees and a past president of the Hampton University Ministers Conference.



GET YOUR COPY TODAY AT IVPRESS.COM.



Earn a **Master of Pastoral Studies** in ***Roman Catholic Studies***

Apply today!

Visit our website, call, or send an email to admissions@lextheo.edu for more information.

lexington
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

lextheo.edu • 866-296-6087

Photo: Pexels

From the Editor

The New Testament stories of Mary Magdalene—and the way the church has treated her since biblical times—tell us a lot about the church today, and perhaps even more about our still-patriarchal society in general. In scripture, and in other contemporaneous documents, Mary is portrayed as one of Jesus' closest confidants; after his resurrection, Jesus appears to her first and commissions her to tell the others (John 20). But, as Kyndall Rae Rothaus explains in this issue, the church has had a difficult time accepting the biblical portrait of Mary as one of Jesus' closest and most faithful disciples. Instead, beginning most notably with a 6th-century papal sermon that called her a prostitute, Mary has been portrayed as a "fallen woman" in need of repentance or, sometimes, as Jesus' lover, but not as the "apostle to the apostles" she became by merit.

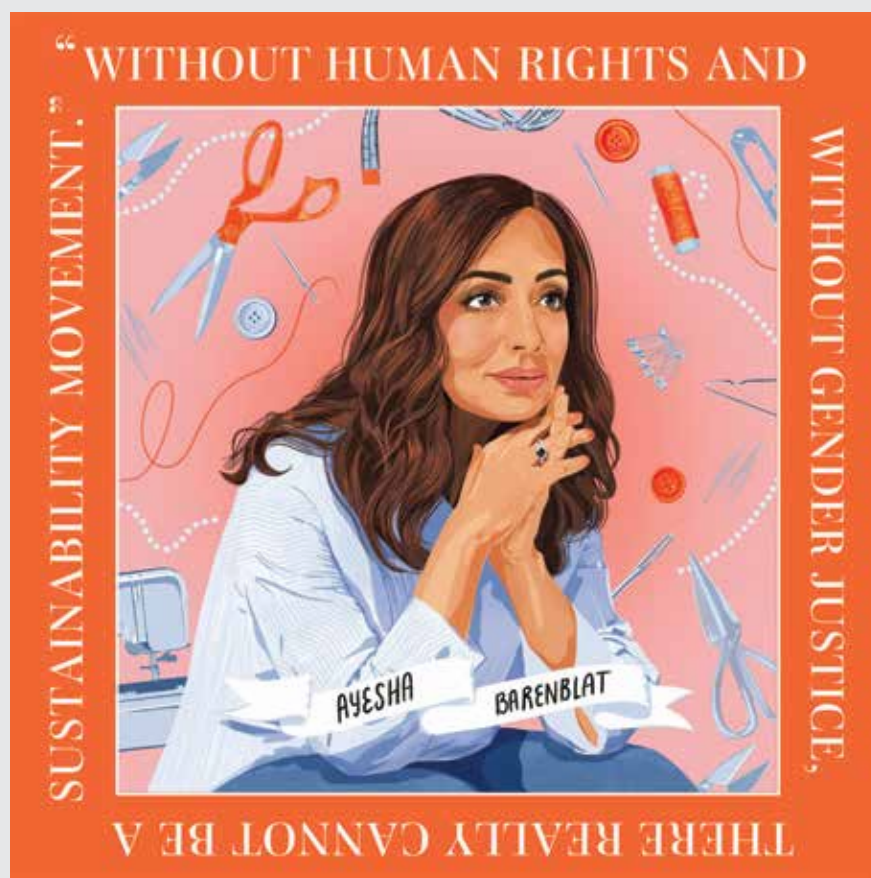
Why does it matter that we get Mary Magdalene right? As Rothaus explains, the way the church has treated her says more about the church than it does about Mary—and that reclaiming Mary, the first witness to the resurrection, offers us a chance to get a glimpse of that same resurrection hope.

RESPONSE

In Solidarity and Peace

In the June issue of *Sojourners*, Maria J. Stephan wrote on the ongoing nonviolent resistance in Ukraine, noting that "nearly every segment of Ukrainian society is engaged in some form of mass resistance and dissent" ("Stand with Ukraine—Nonviolently," June 2022). "The civic activism and self-organization among the Ukrainians is amazing, and it shows that human side of sustaining life, loving, connecting, empathizing—despite the huge traumas everyone carries in their soul," Giedre Normandie responded [f](#). And Terry Jo Harford blessed the Ukrainian effort [f](#), saying, "May they continue in solidarity and peace!"

Write us: response@sojo.net



"WHAT— EVER THE FIGHT, DON'T BE LADY— LIKE."

Mary "Mother Jones" Harris
Labor organizer

CONTRIBUTING



Jim Rice

Peacemaking has been "a central issue for five decades" for both *Sojourners* magazine and its editor, Jim Rice (p. 9). Rice, who was on the staff of Georgetown University's Center for Peace Studies when he joined *Sojourners* Peace Ministry in the 1980s, contends that peacemaking is "an intrinsic part of the gospel"—and one of the most challenging aspects of being a Christian in our militarized culture.



Céire Kealty

Exploring fashion "ultimately comes down to critiquing excess," says Céire Kealty (p. 26), a Ph.D. student at Villanova University. She says the study of religion and theology "reveals striking insights about consumption, community, and responsibility," and she hopes readers come away "eager to interact [differently] with their clothes and other 'mundane' objects in their lives," adding that individual actions "need to be joined with collective movements."

Adam Russell Taylor President
Karen L. Lattea Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer
Jessica Felix-Romero Chief Strategy and Impact Officer
Adwoa Rey Chief Advancement Officer

Jim Rice Editor
Julie Polter Managing Editor
Rose Marie Berger Senior Editor
Christina Colón Associate Editor
Candace Sanders Art Director

Bob Sabath Director of Web and Digital Technology
Betsy Shirley Managing Editor, sojo.net
Jenna Barnett Associate Culture Editor, sojo.net
Mitchell Atencio Assistant News Editor, sojo.net
Josiah R. Daniels Assistant Opinion Editor, sojo.net
Christian Smurtherman Multimedia Director
Jayne Marie Smith Multimedia Producer
Tiarra Lucas Graphic Designer
Heather Brady Audience Engagement Manager
Lisa Daughtry-Weiss Sr. Dir. of Fdn. Relations, Performance Officer
Beth Cooper-Chrismon Director of Individual Giving
Rachel Buller Director of Donor Services
Jason Smith Director of Strategic Gifts
Anthonia Emordi Associate Director of Strategic Gifts
Jerrica Frazier Donor Services and Database Manager
Sandra Sims Senior Director of Marketing
Cynthia J. Martens Senior Director of Circulation and Production
Sandy Ovalle Martínez Director of Campaigns and Mobilizing
Terrance M. McKinley Director of Racial Justice and Mobilizing
Susanna Bean Digital Mobilizing Manager
Paola Fuentes Gleghorn Immigration/Women & Girls Campaign Coordinator
Christine Lee Campaigns and Mobilizing Associate
Lauren Whitney Reliford Political Director
Moya Harris Fellowship Program Director, Church Network Coordinator
Brian Thomas Senior Accountant
Krystal Brewer Office Manager
Elizabeth Denlinger Reaves Sr. Adviser and Dir. of the President's Office
J.K. Granberg-Michaelson Senior Research Associate
Aria Christenson Executive Assistant

FELLOWS **Olivia Bardo**, Sojo.net; **Liz Bierly**, Magazine; **Gerald Olufemi-Lamar Darling Jr.**, Campaigns; **Aleja Hertzler-McCain**, Magazine; **Jules Park**, Advertising; **Jackie Resh**, Circulation; **Chloe Specht**, Donor Services; **Katie Smart**, Communications; **Leslie Williston**, Digital Mobilizing and President's Office

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS Michelle Alexander, Diana Butler Bass, Walter Brueggemann, Joan Chittister, Shane Claiborne, Michael Curry, Edwidge Danticat, Marie Dennis, Julian DeShazier, E.J. Dionne Jr., Kelly Brown Douglas, Joshua DuBois, Michael Eric Dyson, Reta Halteman Finger, Kenyatta R. Gilbert, Eddie Glaude, Wes Granberg-Michaelson, David Gushee, Cynthia L. Hale, Lisa Sharon Harper, Jen Hatmaker, Obery Hendricks, Carolina Hinojosa-Cisneros, Barbara A. Holmes, José Humphreys III, Joel Hunter, Liuan Huska, Kathy Khang, Grace Ji-Sun Kim, Anne Lamott, James Martin, Bill McKibben, Brian McLaren, Jeania Ree V. Moore, Otis Moss III, Ched Myers, Whitney Parnell, Eboo Patel, Soong-Chan Rah, Richard Rohr, Alexia Salvatierra, Rob Schenck, Najeeba Syeed, Barbara Brown Taylor, Sharon E. Watkins, Cornel West, Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, Randy Woodley, Bill Wylie-Kellermann, Jenny Yang, Faith-Marie Zambé

Sojourners Online: sojo.net, **Twitter:** @sojourners
 Get free email updates at sojo.net/newsletters.



**\$1.25
million**

Gap between top prize money for golf's U.S. Women's Open and the men's U.S. Open in 2021

2

Number of women in the top 10 highest-paid tennis players in the world

2020

Year a WNBA labor deal established fully paid maternity leave for players

OUR MISSION

The mission of *Sojourners* magazine is to inspire hope and action by articulating the biblical call to racial and social justice, life and peace, and environmental stewardship.

BUSINESS AND EDITORIAL ADDRESS

Please send all business and editorial correspondence to *Sojourners*, 408 C Street NE, Washington, DC 20002.

SUBSCRIPTION AND CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Subscribers: Visit sojo.net/subscribe to manage your subscription or print change of address on a card with old address label attached; send all subscription correspondence and address changes (except countries listed below) to *Sojourners*, PO Box 48, Congers, NY 10920-9856, call 1-800-678-9691, or email us at sojourners@cambeywest.com (allow six weeks to process any address change). **POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:** *Sojourners*, PO Box 48, Congers, NY 10920-9856.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

U.S.: \$39.95 one year print (for first-class mail, \$50). Digital subscriptions to *Sojourners* are available for \$19.95 at sojo.net/subscribe. **Australia:** \$78 one year (via air mail, paid in Australian currency, and sent to MediaCom, PO Box 610, Unley 5061 SA). **New Zealand:** \$97 one year (via air mail, paid in New Zealand currency, and sent to MediaCom, PO Box 9483, Wellington, NZ); email admin@mediacom.org.au. **Canada:** \$49.95 one year (paid in USD). **All other international** (six to eight weeks delivery): \$59.95 one year. **Air service overseas** (two to three weeks delivery): \$69.95 one year. Except where noted, payable in U.S. currency.

NEWSSTAND CIRCULATION

Newsstand circulation through Districor Magazine Distribution Services. For more information, call (905) 619-6565, fax (905) 619-2903, or email mraucci@districor.com.

ADVERTISING

Advertisement in *Sojourners* does not imply editorial endorsement. For information on display advertising in *Sojourners*, please write to: Advertising, *Sojourners*, 408 C Street NE, Washington, DC 20002; advertising@sojo.net, or visit sojo.net.

SUBMISSIONS

Submission guidelines can be found at: sojo.net/write. Please direct poetry to the Poetry Editor at poetry@sojo.net and books, music, and reviews to the Review Editor by post (address below) or at reviews@sojo.net. No submissions will be returned.

Printed in the U.S.A. on recycled paper. All content copyright ©2022 *Sojourners* 408 C Street NE, Washington, DC 20002. Phone (202) 328-8842





1

GRAIN OF SALT

BY JIM RICE

SERVING TWO MASTERS

Putin's carnage in Ukraine has given us a horrendous window into the immorality of modern warfare. We may feel one side is an innocent victim and the other an egregious aggressor, but the images from bombed-out civilian sites give us daily, gruesome reminders that the waging of war today is anything but "just," typified by indiscriminate killing, high civilian casualties, and military actions that are in no way last resorts—and behind all this brutality, the very real threat from even-more-devastating nuclear "weapons of mass destruction." War is hell, and it always has been, but modern weaponry, tactics, and attitudes make it perhaps more hellacious than ever, especially for civilians.

In this context, who can serve as the outside moral voice, raising questions around the ethics of modern warfare? Who can bring to bear the church's teaching

**CAN MILITARY
CHAPLAINS BE
FAITHFUL MINISTERS
OF THE CHURCH
WHEN THEY ARE
ACCOUNTABLE,
INSTEAD, TO THEIR
MILITARY SUPERIORS?**

“WHO CAN CHALLENGE THE MORALITY OF A WAR AND HOW IT IS WAGED?”

on war and hold the warriors, particularly those who profess faith, to account? Who can challenge the moral framework of a war and how it is waged? The answer to those questions is probably not “military chaplains.” Tom Witt, a longtime activist and former head of the Lutheran Peace Fellowship, is concerned about the fact that military chaplains are in the military chain of command. “When chaplains are hired by, under the command of, and getting paid by the military,” Witt told *Sojourners*, “there’s not much chance they can be anything other than cheerleaders, or people who affirm whatever kind of war that we’re in, even if it’s not a so-called ‘just war.’” What we have, Witt said, “is a military chaplaincy rather than a chaplaincy to the military”—and such “embedded” chaplains aren’t free to oppose military doctrines or actions, even if they contradict the teachings of the church.

Many chaplains, of course, wouldn’t be inclined to oppose U.S. military actions even if they could. The largest educator of military chaplains in the

country, according to its website, is Liberty University, which aims to “provide spiritual leadership” and “advise commanders” to “best care for the warrior’s soul” and to provide “spiritual warrior care” and “special counsel to military leaders.” A search for the words “peace” and “peacemaking” on Liberty’s chaplaincy site brought no results. The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) of the Southern Baptist Convention, for its part, references the religious freedom of military chaplains in its 2022 public policy agenda. But the religious freedom the ERLC seeks to protect isn’t about the ethics of war; the group wants to protect the right of conservative chaplains who “cannot adapt their professional lives to the ongoing demands of the sexual revolution”—an article on the ERLC site defended the right of chaplains to refuse ministry to LGBTQ members of the armed forces.

Military chaplains are charged with the religious education, pastoral care, and discipleship of a generation of young people in the “largest youth organization in the world,” as some have called the U.S. military. Can they truly be faithful to their calling as ministers of the church when they are accountable, instead, to their military superiors? As Witt put it, “We need to say no to participating in wars that conflict with our church’s criteria for making such decisions, and how can we do that if we have chaplains who serve directly under military commanders?”

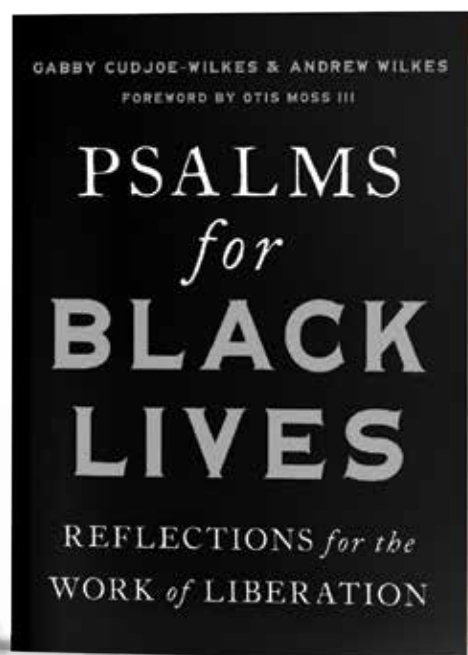


Jim Rice is editor of *Sojourners* magazine.

RESPIRE *for the* WEARY ACTIVIST

UpperRoomBooks.com/BlackLives

Available August 1, 2022



9780835820073...\$15.99

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR SUBSCRIPTION TO SOJOURNERS!



Did you know that you can read *Sojourners* magazine on your computer, phone, *and* tablet? With your print subscription, you get full access to every digital edition of the magazine **we've ever published.**



You can read *Sojourners'* award-winning stories wherever and whenever by visiting **sojo.net/register**, choosing a username and password, and entering the account number shown on your print subscription label.

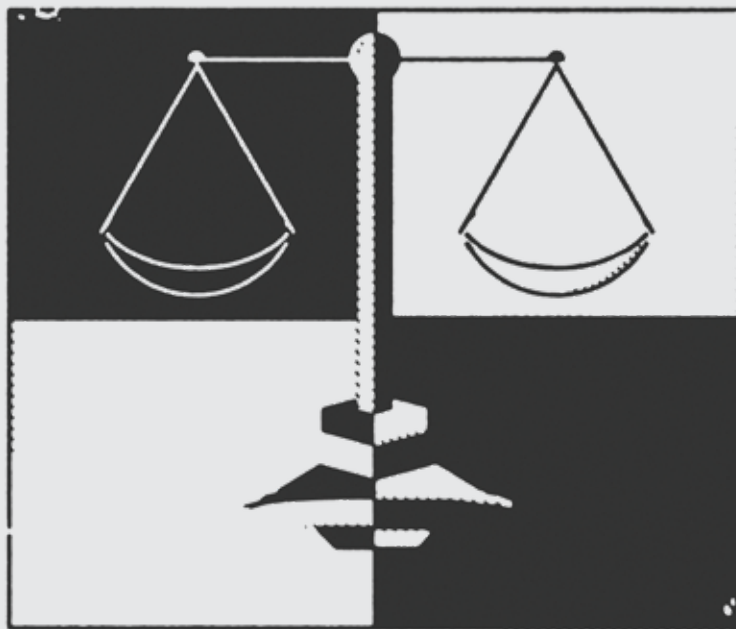
Where you go, we go. Activate your online subscription: **sojo.net/register.**

Questions about your digital subscription? Email us at **magsubs@sojo.net.**

SOJOURNERS

FINDING COMMON SACRED GROUND

Seeing abortion through Hispanic culture is to see that there are more than two possible positions.



2

Hispanic cultures are profoundly relational. Family is family whoever they are, whatever they believe, and whatever they have done. Family also includes people who are not blood relations; being family is a way of life. Being family means that the suffering of our daughters and our mothers, our sisters and our cousins, matters. Our relationship with God also matters to us, and how we see and sense the voice of God influences our choices.

So, what does this all mean when it comes to abortion?

Whether or not Hispanics fight to affirm *Roe v. Wade*, our fundamental perspectives may not fit neatly into the two sides of the debate. While some values are shared across generations, they are differently weighted in ways that impact political decisions, creating a family dialogue that is profound and deeply emotional.

A core precept of liberation theology in Latin America, and its evangelical cousin *misión integral* (holistic mission), is the power of place and position in determining perspective. While it is not possible to talk about a single “Hispanic culture,” given the broad diversity of the

Hispanic community, there are common experiences and values between various Hispanic cultures that impact the way that we see the moral, scriptural, and spiritual issues in the abortion/choice debate.

The following formative experiences and values have significant impact for many of us.

Seeing God in babies. I remember when I was a pastor of an English- and Spanish-speaking congregation trying to explain to the English-speaking members why we let children run around the church freely, appreciating their playfulness. On a deeper level, I remember explaining why we would take in a distant cousin's child to live with us without a moment's hesitation. In traditional Hispanic Catholic circles, the figure of Christ as a child is one of the most popular depictions, along with Madonna and child images. There are many Hispanic people who are deeply troubled by abortion. If we can't know the exact point at which cells become a baby, many Hispanics would feel like we should approach the question with fear and trembling.

Religious freedom. In the United States, our broken immigration system has separated families and destroyed dreams. Regardless of political position, most Hispanics pray for family and church members who are trying to circumvent deportation, and some actively support sanctuary programs, which stand up against immigration law to save lives. In various Latin American countries, Protestant Christians have experienced persecution and marginalization through the integration of the Roman Catholic Church and the state. Many Hispanics resonate deeply with individuals and families having the right to make religious decisions without the interference of the state. This perspective can lay a foundation for supporting the right of a pregnant person and their family to choose whether or not to have an abortion.

Government care for the most vulnerable. The majority of Hispanic voters, according to the Center for American Progress, support a strong safety net of government programs in general, which would certainly extend to making it possible for women to have the support necessary to care for themselves and their children. The image

HOW WE SEE AND SENSE THE VOICE OF GOD INFLUENCES OUR CHOICES.

of a person who protects life in the womb and not afterward would not fit Hispanics, regardless of our position on abortion.

Discrimination. Most Hispanics, Pew Research found, believe that racial and class discrimination occur and are unacceptable. Some also are strongly opposed to machismo—particularly younger Hispanics. The loss of *Roe v. Wade* would prevent abortions primarily for poor women—not for rich women who could travel. It could also strengthen the power of men over women. These are factors that connect Hispanic beliefs and feelings about discrimination with the potential loss of *Roe v. Wade*.

To see the issue through Hispanic eyes is to see that there are more than two possible positions. Recognizing this opens us up to standing and struggling with each other on common sacred ground. ♦

Alexia Salvatierra, a pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, is academic dean of Centro Latino at Fuller Theological Seminary in California and co-chair of Sojourners' board.



Master of Arts in Spiritual and Social Transformation



A new professional master's degree that links faith formation with career development



with tracks for non-profit leadership and spiritual direction

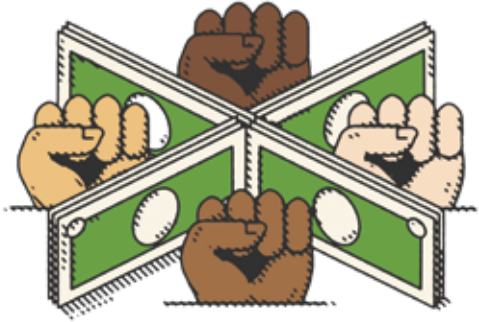


Learn more:

bethanyseminary.edu/MASST

COMMENTARY

BY JONATHAN TRAN



THE COLOR OF MONEY

Racial capitalism has built into its politics a divide-and-conquer strategy.

We have built an entire political economy that relies on racism. We can no more give up the racism than we can give up the political economy that funds our lives. Racism persists because racism works. It does not, of course, work for all of us—but that is somewhat the point.

Racism naturalizes what are obviously unnatural relationships forced between value and labor and land and bodies. As the ultimate gaslighting move, racism blames the oppressed for their oppressions, claiming it is something “natural” about them, something about their “race.” This naturalization attempts to justify the morally unjustifiable and makes what is obviously evil, idolatrous, and abhorrent look good, true, and beautiful. Following the Black radical tradition, we can call this gaslit normalization of domination and exploitation “racial capitalism.”

Racial capitalism has built into its politics a divide-and-conquer strategy. The Black Marxist Oliver Cromwell Cox laid this out in 1948 when he observed that poor whites, migrant Chinese, and Jim Crow-era African Americans suffered similar, if also unique, oppressions at the hands of politicians, factory owners, planters, labor agents, managerial elites, and so on, but it was the fate of those crushed by racial capitalism to blame one another while giving a free pass to those most responsible for their sorry lot. Rather than finding ways to build coalitional solidarity against oppressors, they became divided by race. In this scenario, oppressed whites sided with their white oppressors in exchange for what W.E.B. Du Bois called the “public and psychological wage” of white racial identity—and many participated in all manner of white supremacist violence to seal the deal. All the while, African Americans and Chinese were made out to be enemies of the nation and of one another.

In explaining the mindset normalizing chattel slavery in colonial America, social anthropologist Audrey Smedley pointed to the role of conventions. “Conscientiously moral human beings do not conventionalize such habits of thought and behavior without formulating a rationalizing ideology,” she wrote. Such conventionalization amounts to a culture of domination. If you want to challenge that culture, you need to dismantle enough of it to destabilize the conventions, and to destabilize the con-

ventions, you’re going to need to dismantle the world comprised of those conventions.

In the 1980s, we saw the emergence of a global neoliberal capitalism that was similarly racialized and intended to divide and conquer. Among other things, neoliberalism splintered the political Left. Some remained committed to questions of class, gender, and respective identities as part of a liberative project. Others adopted the shift from democratic citizen to consumer in transnational capitalism. There emerged a perspective that essentialized the identities themselves—as if one’s identity became a self-interpreting, self-realizing project. This latter reality, grafted on to the ascent of a therapeutic culture, centered around the moral ideal of personal authenticity. We saw the rise of “identity politics,” with no clear connection to the liberative realities out of which those identities, such as Asian American, first emerged.

This is largely where we are now: each one individually burdened with a project of asserting, securing, and protecting their own identities. We even introduce ourselves and our identities in competition with other identities. What you’ll notice about this history is that it’s remarkably similar to the creation of “race” at the beginning of the United States, when constituent racial identities were created as a divide-and-conquer strategy. Identity politics allows racial capitalism to be normalized so it can continue to dominate and work for economic elites.

I believe we are at an inflection point. We are weaving our identities back into the history of our communities and their larger socio-political realities. We have an opportunity to move from a deeply individual identity project to a more public political one driven to collective liberation, where lived experience becomes the substance of identity and liberation becomes its vocation and direction.

Much of my analysis follows a Marxist critique of the ideology of race. But there is one place I understand Christianity as departing significantly from Marxism. Marxists are waiting for a revolution to start. Christians are living into a revolution that is 2,000 years old. ✱

Jonathan Tran, author of *Asian Americans and the Spirit of Racial Capitalism*, holds the George W. Baines Chair of Religion at Baylor University in Waco, Texas.

A

A young girl sits on her father's shoulders at a women's soccer game in California, where fierce women play on the field, wise women own the professional soccer club, and women on the U.S. national team just won the right to be paid equally. The father locks eyes with Abby Wambach, a veteran in the fight for equal pay and a winner of two Olympic gold medals and a World Cup title. The father points up to his daughter and shouts to Abby: "This is the only world she'll ever know."

It's commonplace for institutions to fail to honor a woman's worth—from rulings in domestic violence cases to recent decisions from the highest courts that restrict reproductive options. But the U.S. Women's National Soccer Team is not common. And they are not used to losing. The team, which has won four World Cups and four Olympic gold medals, is considered the world's best women's soccer team, and yet the players' efforts to be compensated fairly have been an uphill battle for decades. For instance, under the most recent collective bargaining agreements, a player on the women's team, according to *The Washington Post*, would earn about 89 percent of the compensation U.S. men received for a series of exhibition games. That disparity was true in 2018 and 2019, when the U.S. women won the World Cup and the U.S. men failed to qualify for the tourney.

In May, the way these women dominated the soccer world finally translated into enhanced legal and fiscal power when a first-of-its-kind collective bargaining agreement created true pay equity in the sport and birthed a new future for women athletes. In the new agreement, the women's and men's teams will split earnings and receive benefits equally. For example, the men's team will receive paid childcare at all practices

ON EARTH AS IT IS ON THE SOCCER PITCH



and matches and the women's team is guaranteed equal field and travel accommodations as well as health care and retirement benefits. This collective victory highlights that when women win, we all win.

In my theology as a Christian pastor (and former collegiate athlete), the tangibility of heaven on Earth happens in fleeting moments of agency and grace. For my pastoral and athletic heart, heaven on Earth is a soccer field filled with women of valor sprinting toward glory and people of all ages, races, and nationalities shouting praises of "GOOOAL" in awe of a World Cup victory.

Midge Purce, a forward on the national team and a member of the collective bargaining committee, said that, thanks to this off-the-field win, young girls will "grow up recognizing their value instead of fighting to find it." Is there anything more aligned with the kingdom of heaven than each person recognizing their divine value and society affirming and cherishing that worth? I'm grateful that the eyes of the young girl watching that soccer game from her father's shoulders can see a world where women are valued not just for their successes but for their being. And more so, I'm grateful that even for a moment, staring out at the cheering fans and fresh-cut pitch, she, and we, can see a small slice of heaven on Earth. ✕

**WHEN WOMEN WIN,
WE ALL WIN.**

Kaeley McEvoy is associate pastor of Westmoreland Congregational United Church of Christ in Bethesda, Md. She is a big fan of the Holy Spirit and the Washington Spirit, D.C.'s pro soccer club.

BANKING ON CLIMATE CHANGE

3



Sometimes, when you're reading a murder mystery, a new clue appears as if out of thin air—the coroner phones the detective to report that the corpse was drugged with some rare toxin, or an image conveniently appears on old CCTV footage. There was a similar moment in the climate fight this spring, when investigators came up with something remarkable: a number definitively linking the biggest banks in the world to the biggest crisis in the world.

We've known for quite a while, of course, that Chase, Citi, Wells Fargo, and Bank of America have been lending vast sums to the fossil fuel industry—more than a trillion dollars since the Paris climate accords were signed. But it took investigative research by a climate consultancy called South Pole to make clear exactly how massive that money was. They found, in essence, that if you kept \$125,000 in the banking system (your retirement account, or your college savings fund), then that money emitted more carbon than all the other actions of a normal American life combined. That cash is recycled into pipelines and liquefied natural gas terminals—you might as well be spending it to drill oil wells in your backyard.

**YOUR RETIREMENT ACCOUNT
EMITTED MORE CARBON THAN ALL
THE OTHER ACTIONS OF A NORMAL
AMERICAN LIFE COMBINED.**

The main focus of the South Pole report was not individuals; it was the biggest companies on Earth, and it showed that while Google and Microsoft and Apple were busily trying to reduce their carbon footprints, their cash hoards were producing vast clouds of greenhouse gases simply by sitting in the bank. Google's emissions were up 111 percent accounting for the new data—that is, their cash produces more carbon than *everything else they do*.

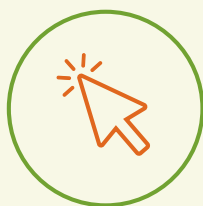
That's potentially important: It means that these giants have both motive and opportunity to lean on the banks to stop their fossil fuel lending. The tech companies have all promised to reduce their carbon footprints to zero, which they can't do if their bankers are spewing carbon. But they're too big to bank with some small green bank—taken together, the cash holdings of the five biggest tech firms would make them the fifth-largest bank in the country. They can't change banks; they have to *change* their banks.

For the rest of us, it's easier. A local credit union or community bank is less likely to be engaged in the oil trade; there are a few banks (Amalgamated on the East Coast, Beneficial State on the West) that are explicitly fossil free. And there are credit cards to replace those from the big boys. Some of us at Third Act are helping to organize a pledge: If the banks won't start to shift by year's end, we'll do a mass card-cutting and account-switching.

Changing your furnace and your car and your cooktop are relatively hard work; changing your bank isn't painful, but it won't cost you anything. Except a cloud of carbon hanging over your head. ❖

Bill McKibben, founder of 350.org and Third Act, is the author most recently of *Falter: Has the Human Game Begun to Play Itself Out?*

Seek growth



CONTACT US TODAY.

Find out how we can help you meet your financial goals at everence.com

Find financial services rooted in faith values – caring, hope and peace. At Everence Financial® we offer complete financial services to help you get to where you want to grow.

Learn more about Everence.

everence.com

800-348-7468



Everence®

Banking | Investing | Retirement | Financial Planning
Insurance | Charitable Giving

Securities offered through Concourse Financial Group Securities, Inc. (CFGS), Member FINRA/SIPC. Advisory services offered through Concourse Financial Group Advisors, a DBA for CFGS, a Registered Investment Advisor. Investments and other products are not NCUA or otherwise federally insured, may involve loss of principal and have no credit union guarantee.

Products and services offered through Everence Trust Company and other Everence entities are independent of and are not guaranteed or endorsed by Concourse Financial Group Securities, or its affiliates.

FROM THE DUST

BY LIUAN HUSKA

CHRIST BORE OUR CONTAMINATION



W**We often utter** the phrase “Christ bore our sins” in a metaphysical sense, assuming sins occupy a place in our hearts, consciences, or spirits. Jesus died, we think, because of our *spiritual* transgressions. But I’m starting to see that sin isn’t just spiritual (as if anything could be *just* spiritual in our very physical world). Sin is also environmental. It impacts our air, water, and soil. It alters our ecosystems.

Sin might be defined as stepping out of right relationship with Creator and the rest of creation. The standard American lifestyle, which would require five Earths to sustain if everyone lived this way, puts the U.S. in a state of dire transgression. Pursuing a bloated illusion of progress, so many businesspeople, decision-makers, and culture-shapers have ignored the cost.

The wages of sin is death, says the apostle Paul (Romans 6:23). Today we are witnessing mass extinctions of species, destruction of homes and habitats by climate chaos, and premature deaths in communities closest to pollution sources. I live in one of these communities, though I didn’t

JESUS IS WITH US, NOT JUST IN OUR HEADS AND HEARTS BUT IN OUR HURTING BODIES AND ON THIS GROANING EARTH.

know it when we moved here. My town is home to four Superfund sites, legacy pollution from a gaslight mantle factory that later produced thorium for the country’s atomic bombs in World War II. Though the sites have been remediated, residual contamination will pervade the land for millennia to come. Researching this history, I notice who moved away—white folks with resources—and who stayed—brown and white working-class folks who had no choice. Who would choose contamination?

I’ve grown to love this town and its people, but if I had known about our house’s proximity to the old factory site, I would have thought twice about moving here. Now that I’m here, though, I’m reading the story of Jesus’ incarnation differently. The son of God, who was without contamination, didn’t cling to his “pure” status, but instead came to live in our toxic world (paraphrasing Philippians 2:6-7). He held children whose lungs have been scarred by bad air. He touched bodies bent over from the burden of our endless production. Emmanuel, God is with us. Even in this land that we have tainted with our selfish, thoughtless deeds. Christ bore our contamination.

I am not Christ. I’m not here to bear sin, metaphysical or environmental. But Christ’s example of remaining with those whose bodies have been harmed by our collective transgressions prods me to ask: What does following Christ mean when I have the option to move somewhere without legacy pollution? What does following Christ mean for any of us who have choices in a world where others do not?

There are no glib answers here. But understanding that sin is also environmental helps. It means Christ’s work matters even here. Jesus is with us, not just in our heads and hearts but in our hurting bodies and on this groaning Earth. If Christ remains, even in this place, maybe I can too. ✱

Liuan Huska is a freelance journalist and author of *Hurting Yet Whole: Reconciling Body and Spirit in Chronic Pain and Illness*.

BUILD THE FAITHFUL FUTURE WITH SOJOURNERS



For 50 years, Sojourners has put faith into action for social justice. And we're just getting started.

With your support, we are co-creating a more just and peaceful world where people reject fear and hate and embrace love and strategic action. Our **50th Anniversary Campaign** is a unique opportunity to provide the foundation for future movement leadership, financial sustainability, and infrastructure that are critical to expanding our voice and impact.

With your one-time gift of \$50 or more—or monthly gift of any size—you will receive a limited-edition 50th Anniversary lapel pin! Visit sojo.net/50years to learn more.

Get a free **limited-edition**
50th Anniversary lapel pin!



SOJOURNERS
BUILDING THE FAITHFUL FUTURE

EYEWITNESS

4



**"I HAD RUN OUT OF
MASSACRE SERMONS."**

‘IN A STRANGE LAND’

Tops Market is located seven-tenths of a mile away from our church, and it is the grocery store almost all my members use because it is the only grocery store for two miles. I wanted to be very careful that we left space for the community to mourn and to acknowledge the atrocity that happened before the descent of media and before the tragedy took on such epic proportions that we could no longer grapple with it as a community. It became the world's tragedy, but we needed to acknowledge that it was Buffalo's first, and specifically that it was the East Side community's grief first.

There had been a call for clergy to come support family members. You had families who were celebrating because their loved one was alive. And then you also had family members who broke down because they received the worst news possible. It was the worst, most intense grief I have ever seen as a clergy person.

I had run out of massacre sermons. What I needed to do was allow my congregation to see that I was wrestling with this. There's no text in the African American tradition that embodies that existential wrestling [more] than Psalm 137:4: "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" And part of my question was: What happens when the strange land becomes your church or your local grocery store?

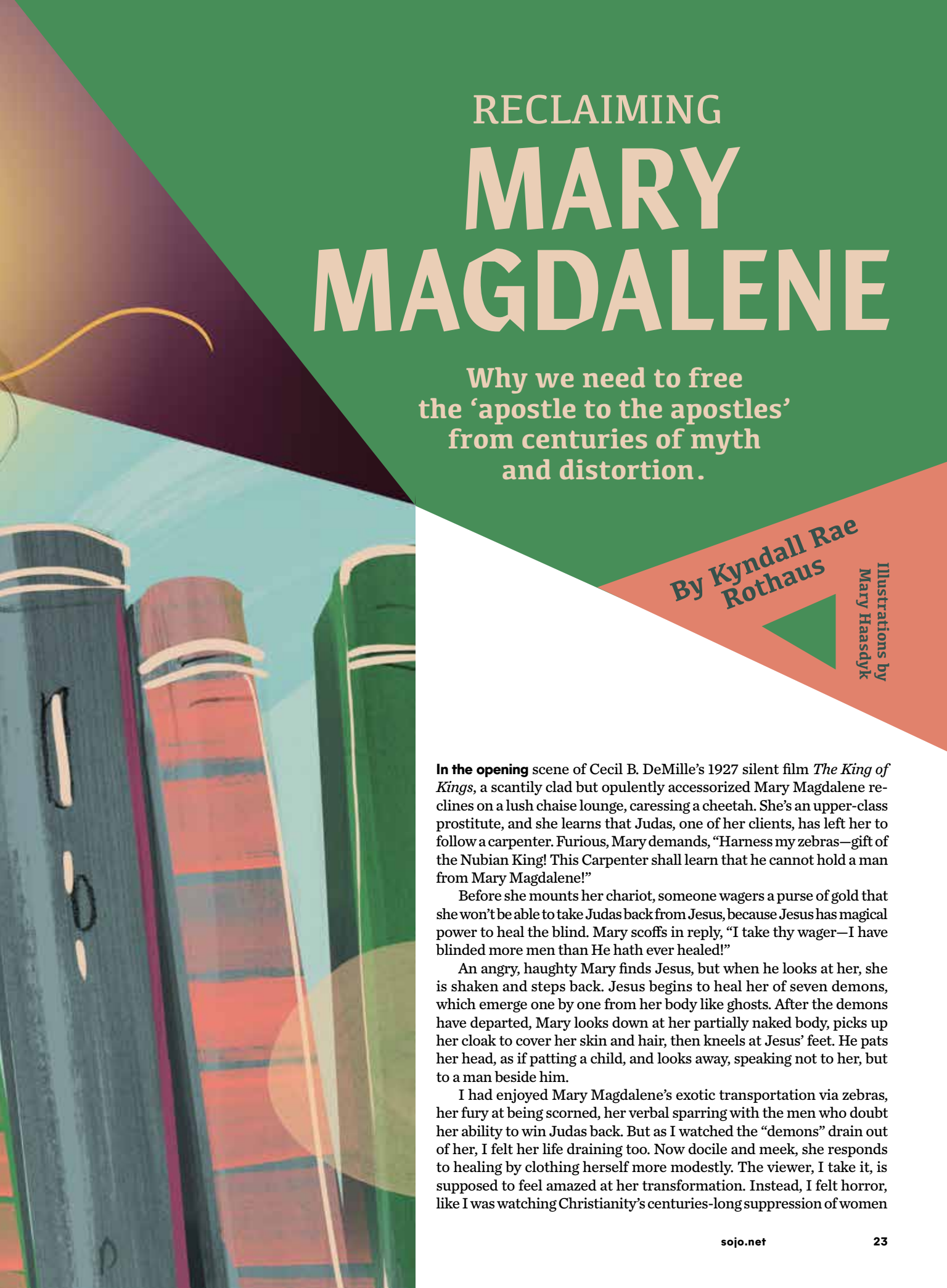
Racism didn't just show up in Buffalo that day. This act of terror depended on Buffalo's segregation. We've got to be careful of just making this about guns. This is also about white supremacy.

I am very much a proponent of that sort of Augustinian theology that says the Lord has no other hands but ours and no other feet but ours. I think that's the message the white church needs to hear, too: that thoughts and prayers are not enough, that it will take our hands and our feet joining in with the will of God. ✕

Rev. Julian Armand Cook is senior pastor of Macedonia Missionary Baptist Church in Buffalo, N.Y. He spoke with *Sojourners'* Liz Bierly.







RECLAIMING MARY MAGDALENE

Why we need to free
the ‘apostle to the apostles’
from centuries of myth
and distortion.

By Kyndall Rae
Rothaus

Illustrations by
Mary Haasdyk

In the opening scene of Cecil B. DeMille’s 1927 silent film *The King of Kings*, a scantily clad but opulently accessorized Mary Magdalene reclines on a lush chaise lounge, caressing a cheetah. She’s an upper-class prostitute, and she learns that Judas, one of her clients, has left her to follow a carpenter. Furious, Mary demands, “Harness my zebras—gift of the Nubian King! This Carpenter shall learn that he cannot hold a man from Mary Magdalene!”

Before she mounts her chariot, someone wagers a purse of gold that she won’t be able to take Judas back from Jesus, because Jesus has magical power to heal the blind. Mary scoffs in reply, “I take thy wager—I have blinded more men than He hath ever healed!”

An angry, haughty Mary finds Jesus, but when he looks at her, she is shaken and steps back. Jesus begins to heal her of seven demons, which emerge one by one from her body like ghosts. After the demons have departed, Mary looks down at her partially naked body, picks up her cloak to cover her skin and hair, then kneels at Jesus’ feet. He pats her head, as if patting a child, and looks away, speaking not to her, but to a man beside him.

I had enjoyed Mary Magdalene’s exotic transportation via zebras, her fury at being scorned, her verbal sparring with the men who doubt her ability to win Judas back. But as I watched the “demons” drain out of her, I felt her life draining too. Now docile and meek, she responds to healing by clothing herself more modestly. The viewer, I take it, is supposed to feel amazed at her transformation. Instead, I felt horror, like I was watching Christianity’s centuries-long suppression of women

captured in a 20-second clip, with Mary Magdalene standing in for all of us. The film was silent, but I could hear it speaking to women loud and clear: “Cover up. Lower your eyes. Kneel. Repent. Leave your body and your sexuality behind. Submit. That’s a good girl. You are allowed to belong now.”

CENTURIES OF OBSESSION

While cheetahs and zebras and Judas as Mary’s patron were new adornments to the Mary Magdalene story, the rest of the film’s portrayal was consistent with how Mary has been painted in popular culture for the last 1,500 years: Mary, the prostitute and sinner, turned repentant.

In the earliest accounts, Mary Magdalene is never called a prostitute. Luke 8 says she was healed of demons, but nothing is mentioned about her line of work. It is not until 591 C.E. that Pope Gregory I preaches a sermon calling Mary Magdalene a prostitute, and the misidentification has stuck. Sculptures and paintings throughout history depict her as repentant sinner, dressed in little to no clothing, accentuating her disreputable past. She eventually became the patron saint of sexual temptation. In Ireland, “Magdalene asylums” were founded to house so-called “fallen” women—sometimes prostitutes, but also girls or women rejected by their families or deemed unacceptable by the state for other reasons.

Public interest in Mary’s sexual life focuses not only on her past before meeting Jesus but also on the nature of her relationship with Jesus. The musicals *Jesus Christ Superstar* (1971) and *A.D. 16* (2022) depict Mary Magdalene in love with Jesus. The *Da Vinci Code* shows them married. In the 1955 novel and 1988 film adaption of *The Last Temptation of Christ* by Nikos Kazantzakis, Satan visits Jesus on the cross with a vision: Jesus sees what it would be like if he married Mary and raised a family instead of dying for humanity’s sins—meaning even after her conversion, Mary Magdalene is not an asset to the gospel but a liability.

The idea of a love affair between Mary and Jesus carries a certain intrigue. I like the way it humanizes Jesus, moving him beyond a sanitized figure and casting him as a regular man who experienced passion and desire like the rest of us. Besides, who doesn’t love a good love story?

Unlike the claims about Mary as a prostitute, Mary as Jesus’ romantic partner does have some historical plausibility. There is tenderness between Jesus and Mary in the garden after the resurrection. Even more evocative are the noncanonical Gnostic texts that repeatedly mention Mary Magdalene as a close companion of Jesus. A line from the gospel of Philip can be translated as “The Teacher loved her more than all the disciples; he often kissed her on the mouth.” If we are to imagine anything about Mary Magdalene’s sexual relations, it is certainly more in keeping with the historical witness to imagine her as Christ’s lover than as a reformed prostitute.

Yet I question our culture’s fixation on Mary Magdalene’s sexual relationships. No matter which version you adopt—the whore or the secret lover, the sex worker or the wife—she is known primarily through her relationships to men and their access to her body. In her groundbreaking book *The Meaning of Mary Magdalene*, Cynthia Bourgeault writes, “The shadow side of Christianity’s notoriously undealt-with issues around human sexuality and the feminine get projected directly onto her.” While it’s perfectly good to recognize women as sexual beings, are women not also so much more than what we do or do not do with our bodies for men?

I’m not against a Mary Magdalene who slept with men as her livelihood or a Mary Magdalene who was madly in love with Christ. But for the love of all things holy, can we please not reduce her to either?

WISE AND WORTHY

Perhaps Jesus simply preferred Mary’s company—intellectually, spiritually, emotionally. Why does Jesus’ attention have to be sexual? We rarely speculate that Jesus had a romantic relationship with the Beloved Disciple, who reclined upon his chest and “whom Jesus loved” in the gospel of John (though some have conjectured that the Beloved Disciple, who is never named in scripture, is Mary Magdalene). I am not aware of films claiming Peter was secretly married to Jesus and *that* is why Jesus gave Peter the keys to the kingdom. We don’t make such assumptions partly because we’re conditioned to think heteronormatively about same-gender affection but also because we assume a man can be chosen as a leader or a confidant due to his intellect, his character, his wisdom. A man can receive favor from another man without it being sexual. What if Mary Magdalene was chosen simply because she was worthy? This is what the ancient texts suggest: She became apostle to the apostles by merit.

The 2018 film *Mary Magdalene* gives us what so many books and novels and paintings have never managed to do: a Mary Magdalene favored by Christ without her sexuality on display. Gone are the references to any sordid past, gone are the hints at romance. Relying on biblical accounts as well as drawing from the noncanonical gospel of Mary, the film highlights Mary Magdalene as someone who

understood Jesus’ true message. She baptizes people alongside Jesus and blesses them like a priest. Jesus confides in her and asks her advice. Predictably, the male disciples are not always comfortable with Mary, her wisdom, or her voice. Their inability to embrace Mary’s leadership fully is quite in keeping with the historical record. In the Bible, the disciples do not believe Mary’s testimony that Christ has risen. In the book of Acts, when they gather to find a replacement for Judas, they pick Matthias (who the heck is that?) even though Mary Magdalene herself, the first witness and preacher of the resurrection, is undoubtedly *sitting right there* when he is chosen.

In the gospel of Philip, when the disciples ask Jesus, “Why do you love her more than all of us?” it’s not a romance question. It’s an access question. In Mary’s gospel, after she reveals her

Finding the “real Mary Magdalene” is more than a history project. It’s a spiritual journey into the depths of our unconscious sexism.



vision from Christ, Peter objects, “Did He really speak privately with a woman and not openly to us? Did He prefer her to us?” This is the real tension in Mary’s story, and it isn’t sexual tension. The disciples can’t handle that a woman received Christ’s favor. And apparently neither can history. Men have been discrediting her reputation ever since, and the gospels highlighting her spiritual authority were banned from the Christian canon.

It’s possible that Mary and Jesus had a thing for each other—even if so, I just don’t think it’s the thing worth noting. And clearly, neither did the gospel or apocryphal writers.

What’s notable about Mary Magdalene is her spiritual leadership. Her insight and wisdom. Her role as first proclaimer. Her devotion as tomb-tender. Her appointment as witness. She is the one Christ entrusts with his presence and his most precious news.

Unlike Peter, who denies Jesus, unlike Judas, who betrays him, unlike the disciples who fall asleep in the garden and the disciples who flee the scene at Jesus’ arrest, unlike the male disciples who lock themselves in an upper room for fear of the authorities, Mary Magdalene persists. She continues to follow Jesus even after he is dead. In all four canonical gospels, she is among the first to witness Jesus’ resurrection, and in John, Jesus appears first to her alone. The Gnostic text *Pistis Sophia* says this about Mary: “You are she whose heart is more directed to the Kingdom of Heaven than all your brothers.” She is the first to proclaim the resurrection to the disciples, making her an “Apostle to the Apostles”—a title officially recognized by the Catholic Church in 2016.

REVEALING HOPE

I believe the task of reclaiming Mary Magdalene from the legends that cloak her real identity is an invitation to our own unclinking. If Bourgeault is correct that we have projected our collective shadow, our “undealt-with issues about human sexuality and the feminine,” onto her, then re-finding the “real Mary Magdalene” is more than a history project. It’s a spiritual journey into the depths of our unconscious sexism—it’s an excavating of our shadow and bringing it into the light. It’s an intense gaze into all that is messed up about our gender constructs; it’s an exorcism, if you will, of our demons.

It’s not simply about retelling Mary’s story without the sex, as if a virgin Mary (we already have one of those) solves the problem. This project to reimagine her is a profound confrontation with the powers that bind us all.

In the gospel of Mary, Mary has a vision in which the soul prevails against seven different powers. Mary’s seven demons and the seven powers she overcomes in the vision feel reminiscent to me of the ancient Sumerian goddess Inanna, who descends into the underworld to be reunited with her sister; at each of the seven gates, she is required to remove an article of her clothing, so that she enters the underworld naked and bare.

I reimagine that scene from *The King of Kings* in which Mary is healed and immediately covers herself up. This time she sheds her clothing—not covering her ornate costume but dropping it altogether. In my vision of her, discarding the cloak is a declaration, like those early Christians who stripped naked to be baptized, as if to say, “I am fully here.”

I think of Mary painted naked on so many canvases, intended to remind us of her supposedly shameful past. But what if the nakedness isn’t about shame? What if she is someone who brings her full, unadulterated self? Maybe Mary Magdalene makes us uncomfortable not just because she is a woman, but because she fought her demons and emerged fully human—something most of us are still too afraid to try.

Recently it was announced that a statue of a woman bought by a couple in Britain for their garden 20 years ago is in fact an authentic Canova sculpture of Mary Magdalene. It is expected to auction this summer for about \$10 million. What if reclaiming Mary Magdalene is like discovering treasure in your own backyard, just waiting to be unearthed? What if not reclaiming her is like leaving a treasure to languish amid weeds and garden overgrowth? Reclaiming her, it seems to me, is about even more than confronting our collective shadow. It’s about witnessing resurrection. ✨

Kyndall Rae Rothaus is a preacher, spiritual director, co-founder of *Nevertheless She Preached*, and author of *Thy Queendom Come: Breaking Free from the Patriarchy to Save Your Soul*.

THE DEMON, AND THE WA

Photo illustration
by Nico Ortega



THE DESERT, WARDROBE

By Céire Kealty

When mountains of discarded clothes
end up rotting in a Chilean desert,
'ecological sin' can be as near as our closet.



IN THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION, THE DESERT SERVES AS THE RUGGED BACKDROP AGAINST WHICH BIBLICAL FIGURES AND MYSTICAL SUCCESSORS ENCOUNTER GOD AND THE UNGODLY. THE DESERT IS A PLACE TO GRAPPLE WITH FEAR, TEMPTATION, AND SELF-UNDERSTANDING. FROM THE PATRIARCHS TO THE DESERT MOTHERS TO CHRIST, THE DESERT IS A PLACE OF GREAT CONSEQUENCE.

Moses' numinous encounter with the burning bush in the desert directs him from bewilderment toward understanding his mission for God's chosen people. David's time in the desert, spurred by the threats of Saul, inspires him to write poetry and prose to articulate his deep desire for God. Jesus, too, journeyed into the desert in preparation for his public ministry. For 40 days, he fasted and endured temptation from the devil—equipping him well for the trials he would later face.

The Christian tradition continues to uphold the desert as a place of encounter and renewal. For example, the Eastern Orthodox tradition reveres the spiritual endurance of St. Anthony who battled demons in the desert for decades, scorning intimidation while asserting his devotion to Christ. His trials and time in the desert granted him *apatheia*, a Greek word that loosely translates to “emotional equilibrium.” For many believers today, these stories provide inspiration in navigating one's own deserts, whether literal or metaphorical.

I find the desert portrait useful when confronting the disturbing forces that persist throughout the world. Though they may not resemble the spirits tormenting Christ and the church's saintly successors, we might be so bold as to call them demons. The demon that has caught my eye in recent months lingers near; it nestles carefully against our skin. We think that the clothes we wear are ours to don, wash, and discard—that they take a tidy journey from drawer to donation bin. In reality, they often land in piles of clothing cast-offs in the Atacama Desert in South America. Thousands of miles away, these monstrous mountains of our own making are growing in number in the driest non-polar desert on Earth.

DUMPED IN THE DESERT

In November 2021, *Al Jazeera* published an article exposing an environmental problem plaguing Chile: excess clothing waste. The country receives a whopping 59,000 tons of clothing from Europe, Asia, and the United States every year.

The garments begin their journey through Latin America at the Port of Iquique, which sits in a free trade zone of northern Chile. From here, they can take three paths: Some clothes may be bought by merchants from



Santiago, the country's capital. Others will likely be intercepted by smugglers who will distribute the clothes to other countries in Latin America. The third path is bleak: Garments that cannot be sold, whether due to prior wear or damage sustained before or during transport, are dumped in the Atacama Desert.

To make sense of Chile's clothing dumping problem, I contacted Beatriz O'Brien, a Chilean sociologist based in Santiago. When I first spoke with O'Brien about Atacama, she sighed deeply. What we in North America were just now seeing, she had witnessed in-person five to six years earlier. Even then, she said, the waste was staggering. “You feel anguish,” she said. “How did this [clothing] get here?”

I share her sorrow. For the last eight years, I have studied the humanitarian and environmental impacts of the global garment industry. I've combed through



reports, testimonies, and photos documenting the tangible harms done by industry excesses. While reading reports on Atacama, I struggled to reconcile the images of discarded garments occupying space meant for the desert flora and fauna and, as Christian history notes, spiritual inspiration.

Juxtaposed against the arid backdrop of Chile's largest desert, the mounds are intrudingly garish, scattered like confetti—a rainbow panoply of environmental ruin growing by 39,000 tons each year, according to *Al Jazeera*. And no one is coming to clean them up.

Because the clothes reside in a free trade zone, a designated area where foreign goods can be moved without paying taxes and duties, there's little incentive for local government to resolve the waste accumulation or pay out of pocket for tariffs to clear the existing waste. So there the clothes sit. Economically



THE DESERT IS A HOLY SPACE OF GENERATIVE ENCOUNTER.

disenfranchised residents of North Chile and neighboring countries travel to the dumps to find garments suitable for their families to wear or for resale in their communities, risking exposure to toxins and pollution caused by the piles. Items that are not retrieved remain splayed across the desert floor, left to rot.

Many of the clothes were treated with chemicals at the time of production or are synthetic, made of polyester and other plastic fabrics. As they degrade, toxins seep into the ground, contaminating soil and injuring surrounding animal and plant life. The process is agonizingly slow, O'Brien reminds me, as many of these garments will take hundreds of years to break down, and there is limited data on the long-term environmental impacts to the region. And, as O'Brien notes, those who have tried to take samples have faced intimidation by smugglers.

Though our discussion was rich with systemic analysis, O'Brien doesn't shy away from sharing the sensorial gravity of her encounter with Atacama. In surveying the desert and its fabric fragments, she sensed an energy that was, in her words, "not good." Perhaps this sensation, this energy, was simply a manifestation of the vices wrought on the desert ground, from environmental abuse to smuggling to illegal activities. Perhaps the sheer gravity of the waste before her—and now, before us—was overwhelming in itself. But what forces are embedded in the rotten, burnt, ruined cast-offs of our closets?

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

In 2019, the Vatican's Synod on the Amazon urged believers to understand "acts and habits of pollution and destruction of environmental harmony" as "ecological sin." We would be right to interpret the waste that accumulates in Atacama as sin. Yet there is still more than meets the eye. When I indulge in shopping excursions and purchase clothes that I don't need (but

certainly *want*), I sense something more behind that want—something persistent, pushing me toward unbridled accumulation, fueling and endorsing my temptation to buy with abandon.

It is here that I find helpful the image of the demonic. At first blush, it might seem inappropriate to frame clothing waste—something so banal, so ubiquitous to many North American households—as demonic. Yet how could we not regard such widespread waste, which denigrates the handiwork of oft-underpaid garment workers, degrades the natural environment, wreaks ecological harm on vulnerable ecosystems and vulnerable people, and hides the hyper-consumptive vices of the materialistic West from view, as ungodly?

The demon of clothing waste materializes most shockingly in the clothing mounds of Atacama. It is embedded deep in the soil. Yet this demon also lurks in every overstuffed closet. It lingers in the filled-to-the-brim donation bags of well-meaning believers who march their excesses to the nearest Goodwill drop-off site, whispering assurances that "a poor child somewhere will wear the stained T-shirt, too-big or too-small pants, and battered sneakers." But these assurances are lies, manufactured by corporations, endorsed by churches, and reinforced by colonialist attachments to white-savior narratives and impersonal acts of charity. And the rotten fruits of these lies are hellish for the world's most vulnerable.

When we face the demon of clothing waste, we face a great shame personally and systemically. The demon of clothing waste forces us to confront the vicious afterlife of our sartorial cast-offs. In doing so, the demon exposes the rot underlying our systems of consumption *and* production. Vox reports that the global garment industry produces between 80 billion and 150 billion garments a year; nearly three-fifths of these





CLOTHES DESERVE THEOLOGICAL ATTENTION.

garments are incinerated or discarded in landfills within a few years of being made. Despite this baffling waste, clothing corporations continue to impose massive production quotas, forcing burdened workers to churn out stock that ultimately goes to waste.

FACING THE DEMON

We may be tempted to despair after considering the expansive waste in the Atacama and in other areas of the world that haven't caught the radar of mainstream media. It appears that our deserts—literal and spiritual—burst at the seams with vice and strife. Yet we must remember that these deserts house more than devastation. O'Brien spoke affectionately of the flora and fauna indigenous to the Atacama. Though it's one of the driest deserts in the world, and the driest in Latin America, the desert supports numerous creatures, from ferns to Andean condors. These critters bespeak creative joy, reminding us of how the desert is a holy space of generative encounter.

The heralded figures of Christianity remind us of this truth. It is in the desert that God spoke to Abraham, urged Moses to guide the Israelites out of slavery which birthed the revelations of Mount Sinai, rejuvenated Elijah at the point of death, and sustained John the Baptist during his ascetic residence in the wilderness. We ought to consider the steadfast words of John the Baptist who, when asked who he was, turned to the words of the prophet Isaiah, saying, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord'" (John 1:23). I envision God's call reverberating through the waste-laden Atacama Desert. This call decries the results of our collective and

corporate greed. But it also urges the hearer toward the promise of salvation, posing the challenge to "make straight the way of the Lord." In the face of thousands of tons of rotting garments, how can we even begin to prepare this way, to atone, and to make things right and just?

We might start by approaching Atacama as a spiritual crossroads. Shall we be tempted once more by the demon of conspicuous consumption, of fast fashion, of disregard for laborers' handiwork? Shall we choose the path of indulgence and detached disposal, while disregarding the harm inflicted on God's green Earth? Or shall we heed the desert cry, scorn the demon of clothing waste, and turn toward more just ends?

Latin American innovators have already heeded this cry. Ecocitex converts textile waste into upcycled products. EcoFibra Chile transforms textile waste into insulation panels. Both companies are addressing clothing waste through creative action. We can be inspired by their work to be more innovative with our excesses and take seriously the call to reduce, reuse, and repair our wardrobe.

Interpreting Atacama as a tangible, spiritual desert, plagued by the demon of clothing waste, proves generative for believers.

Atacama exposes the spiritual relevance of clothing waste, laying bare our disordered desire, haywire appetites, and our multitude of sins—environmental, interpersonal, and transnational. The problem of clothing waste, highlighted by Atacama, exists not only as a concern for ethicists, environmentalists, and sociologists, but also for theologians. Here, the desert and demon awaken us to the spiritual rot made manifest in clothing cast-offs, bursting wardrobes, crowded garment factories, and choked Earth. From here, we can see how clothes—and how we purchase, care for, and discard them—deserve theological attention.

The portrait of the demon and the desert hastens our response to God's call, guiding us toward renewed action. Repenting from the systems in which we are ensnared, and regarding them as they are—demonic and in disrepair—frees us to live differently, to pursue accountability in personal endeavors and structural participation. Facing the demon compels us to consider the resonant call of God weaving through the deserts of our lives.

The creatures persisting throughout Atacama despite the demon of clothing waste make manifest the enduring joy of created life and encourage us to live, act, and even consume anew, for the sake of these lives—and for our own. My hope is you can be moved by Atacama to act in ways that eschew the temptations of conspicuous consumption, secure justice for the communities burdened by our clothing waste, and replenish the Earth with rich soil devoid of discarded dresses. ✨

Céire Kealty is a doctoral student in theology at Villanova University where she studies fashion theory, spirituality, and Christian ethics.

'The Church Must Change Its Thinking about Indigenous People'

An interview with Harry Lafond on what it means to
be both Cree and Catholic.

By Elaine Enns and Ched Myers
Photographs by Tristan Talalee





In April, Pope Francis made a long-awaited apology to a Canadian delegation of Inuit, First Nations, and Métis leaders at the Vatican for the “deplorable” violations children suffered at Catholic-run Indian Residential Schools for more than a century. The pope committed to come to Canada in late July to make his confession personally to residential school survivors and their descendants for

“the abuse and disrespect for your identity, your culture, and even your spiritual values.”

In this historic apology, Pope Francis stated, “Clearly, the content of the faith cannot be transmitted in a way contrary to the faith itself.”

This watershed moment comes 25 years after Harry Lafond—a Catholic and then-chief of the Muskeg Lake Cree Nation in Saskatchewan—raised issues of Indigenous faith and culture in a historic audience with Pope John Paul II during the Vatican’s 1997 Synod of the Americas. An educator and Catholic deacon, Lafond and his ancestors have a long history of building bridges between settler and Indigenous communities. J.B. Lafond, Harry’s great grandfather, was a spokesperson for Chief Keetoowahow at the sixth of the 11 numbered treaties signed by First Nations with the Canadian Crown between 1871 and 1877. At the Treaty 6 table in 1876, J.B. Lafond negotiated with a British colonial government for relief from the flood of encroaching European settlers on the prairies. The parties were trying to avoid the violence waged against the Lakota, Dakota, and Cheyenne to their south. Though traditional Muskeg Lake Cree territory covered hundreds of square miles, Treaty 6 allotted a reserve of only 42 square miles.

Harry Lafond’s family has lived on the Treaty 6 reserve since then. He and eight of his 11 siblings attended nearby St. Michael’s (Duck Lake) Indian Residential School, run by the Roman Catholic Church.

In 1975, after marrying Germaine Laplante, a former Catholic sister of Métis (mixed European and Indigenous) heritage, Lafond worked as an educator and then served for a decade as chief at Muskeg Lake. Later, he directed the Office of the Treaty Commissioner of Saskatchewan, formed to bring Indigenous views of treaty covenants to the wider settler community. His tenure coincided with the years of Canada’s groundbreaking Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

In 2015, after six years of gathering testimony from across Canada, the TRC issued 94 calls to action to repair past and continuing damages wrought by the residential school system as an instrument of colonization. These included 10 calls directed toward churches, one of which demanded an apology from the pope on Canadian soil for abuses—which is being realized this summer, thanks to seeds planted by leaders such as Harry Lafond.

Today, Lafond continues to foster dialogue about what it means to be both Cree and Catholic. He works to renew Cree language and traditions among his people, while accompanying settlers interested in restorative solidarity. In May, the first federal study of Native American boarding schools in the U.S. identified more than 400 Indian Residential Schools and more than 50 associated burial sites. We interviewed Lafond in March and May 2022 by Zoom and email about his journey toward restorative justice and how the church might be replanted in Cree culture and land.—**Elaine Enns and Ched Myers**

Elaine Enns and Ched Myers: How did you feel when you heard Pope Francis’ apology in April to the First Nations delegation?

Harry Lafond: Pope Francis is an exceptional man with a very strong instinct to find the right path to the hearts of his visitors. I felt great hope and comfort that together we will find our way to *wahkohtowin*, Cree law for making relatives. And I recognize that it is an event that should have taken place 500 years ago.

What was the life journey that took you from Muskeg Lake Cree Nation on Treaty 6 territory in Saskatchewan to the Vatican in Rome in 1997? How is Catholicism rooted in the history of the Muskeg Lake Cree?

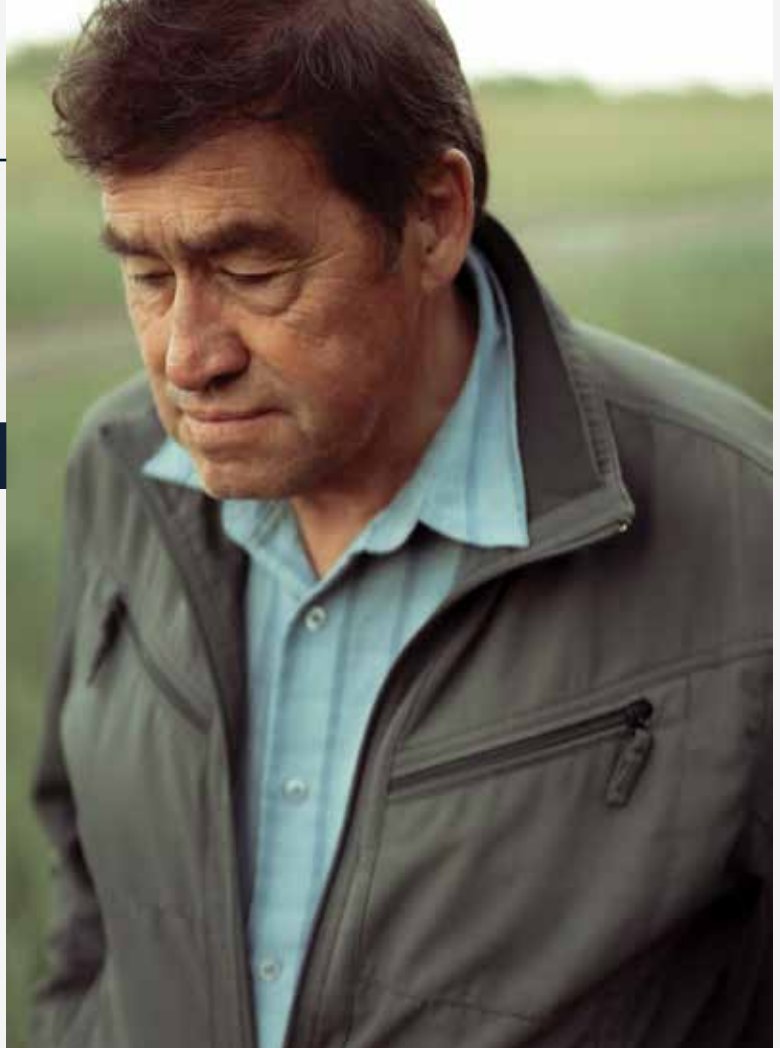
My mom and dad were visibly Catholic in their spiritual practices. My mother would turn on the radio every afternoon to the French channel to pray the rosary. Cree and Michif [the mixed Cree and French language of Métis] were spoken at home; Mom didn’t speak English, and Dad only had enough to function outside the reserve. They were very Cree in how they raised us, allowing us total freedom to explore the world. I learned about myself—about independence, taking care of the Earth, and spirituality—from being out among trees, plants, and animals. But going to residential school at age 7 changed all that.

There was a strong influence in our community of Métis coming westward from Manitoba; they were Roman Catholic because of French colonization. My great-grandfather J.B. Lafond was Métis and married into a Cree family. In 1881, our headman, Pihtikwakew, asked the bishop of Prince Albert to have a Catholic priest reside in Muskeg Lake. He believed a priest would help our people’s economic and cultural transition from hunting-gathering to surviving as agrarians on a small reserve. The priest set up a small school in the community and began teaching the children to read and write, but that was short-lived, as he was reassigned to the new residential school in 1894 in nearby Duck Lake.

You discerned a vocation to the priesthood with the Oblate order as a young man but decided to walk a different path of leadership, eventually becoming chief of your band. How did you hold together these very different forms of leadership?

As a little boy, I was attracted to church as something my parents valued. My dad was

“Leadership in the Cree world is about serving people, and elders taught me the importance of deep listening.”



an alcoholic, but hungover or not, every Sunday morning he'd hitch up the horses and we'd all go to Mass. My mom laughed about how I would round up my cousins to “play church,” me as priest, my little brother as server. Then I became an actual server in church. In the eighth grade, I decided to attend St. Thomas College [run by the Oblate order in North Battleford, Sask.] for boys rather than stay in the area for school.

After two years of formation with the Oblates, I realized that important things in my life were telling me not to step into priesthood. I finished a B.A. at Carleton University in Ottawa in the early 1970s, and in the nation's capital a lot of protests were taking place. The Quebec government was pushing a huge hydroelectric project, and the James Bay Cree were struggling against it, saying, “We are our own people and can take care of ourselves.” This was considered very radical talk. South of the border [in South Dakota], things were happening, like the Wounded Knee [Occupation]. These inspired me to ask many questions about us as a Cree people.

A friend and I hitchhiked to Alberta to attend the Indian Ecumenical Conference, which was one of the first times I experienced a pipe ceremony and the drums. We also encountered the American Indian Movement there, and it was like putting fertilizer on a garden. The Holy Spirit was pushing me to grow.

After graduating from Carleton, I went up in the Northwest Territories, where Dene people were in the midst of hearings about the land and their right to self-govern. Sitting with people in their villages was a great education. Then I worked for a very special artist named Sarain Stump, whose dad was Cree-Shoshone. Sarain, after whom we named our first son, challenged me to speak for myself and took away the fear of being Indigenous. Sarain taught me to question institutions.

In 1988, the Oblates suddenly pulled out of Muskeg Lake. I experienced a real

sense of betrayal. I had walked with them, knew their story and their vision of serving among the poor. “You came here and changed everything,” I told them. “Some of your priests were very controlling in our community, then, without warning, preparation, or transition, you just leave?” I was angry for a long time.

Meanwhile, the Holy Spirit was working overtime. I had just started a teaching job, and a friend came to the classroom door one day and asked me—in front of the kids—if he could nominate me for chief! Germaine and I realized it would be a big sacrifice—I had a good paying job and a family to support. In those days chiefs weren't guaranteed a salary. But we felt it was the right thing to do—and Germaine was always supportive.

I learned quickly that leadership in the Cree world is about serving people, and elders taught me the importance of deep listening. I was able to get people working together, pooling energy and creative juices to problem-solve. I got the Catholic bishop to hire me as part-time coordinator for his work with Indigenous people so that I could have a salary. Through church work, I had amazing opportunities, such as going to Guatemala to meet with In-

digenous people there and visiting John Paul II in 1997.

What was your message to Pope John Paul II? What was the message of the Canadian delegation of Inuit, First Nations, and Métis leaders in 2022?

First, the Catholic Church needs to change its thinking about Indigenous people. We are not the objects of their saving ventures. They need to see the gifts that come out of our spirituality and find where the intersections are with the teachings of Jesus—never mind the European structures! I find complementarity between the two belief systems every day, as do others. We are a beautiful people and want to share who we are and what we believe; let's build a relationship on that basis.

My second emphasis was our own form of spiritual leadership, which has been neither recognized nor embraced by the church. On every reserve I see elders and other spiritual leaders doing a lot better job than priests who spend only an hour a week in our communities. We work daily at relationship building, supporting needy people, helping to deal with grief and pain but also joy! When Christ chose



his disciples, he didn't send them away for seven years to be indoctrinated at a seminary; they were local people, and he brought them into the work.

Personally, I feel a real connection with John Paul II since meeting him. Cree are very much aware of the presence of our ancestors, and he was a *kihci kehtiyinew*, a revered holy man, a grandfather, who was the first pope to visit Indigenous people in North America. A year ago, I was in the hospital feeling isolated because of COVID-19 and not knowing if I would make it out, and I felt his presence; he has become an ancestor friend.

The delegation this April to Rome was part of the 94 Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Report, the driving agenda for the reconciliation journey to right the relationship between us. It calls for an apology from the pope on Canadian soil with a process to implement the principles of a resetting of a relationship gone wrong.

In May 2021, archeologists working with First Nations communities discovered unmarked graves of children on the grounds of a former Catholic Church-run Indian Residential School in Kamloops, British Columbia, and similar unmarked graves were discovered in November at the U.S. federal-run Indian Residential School in Genoa, Neb. How should the

Catholic Church and other churches with this type of haunted history respond to such revelations?

The graves at Kamloops have really awakened Canadians and generated renewed interest in knowing what happened. Pope Francis needs to take ownership of the church that has been put in his care in Canada. Our old people see significant symbolism in an apology, but there also must be a substantive process that follows.

Wahkohtowin in Cree refers to building relationships and connections; we have laws of behavior about how to treat human beings. To reset the relationship between the Catholic Church and Indigenous peoples, we have to follow processes that take us there. One of the most important, as embodied in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, is to put everything on the table. Settlers can't show up talking about reconciliation with fingers crossed. You must accept a retelling of the story with all parts and players included, including what went wrong.

In Canada, every bishop must engage in meaningful relationship with the Indigenous populations of his jurisdiction. My fear is that if the pope's apology falls on deaf ears in his court, we may not recover. But I also have faith that if our delegation to the Vatican spoke from the heart, Francis will hear them in a very deep way.

"I have great hope that my grandchildren will have an opportunity to believe in the message of Jesus Christ from the context of their Cree worldview."

Let's keep the issue of residential school graves in wider context. For one thing, it wasn't just the schools. Muskeg Lake's graveyard, for example, has many unmarked graves because of actions by a priest who plowed them under. For another, residential schools were but one piece of the larger puzzle of colonization, though heart-wrenching because it stole children and destroyed families. But we need to tell the truth about all kinds of things. Incarceration rates are just as destructive of family and individual health. Another example is child welfare. Canada is finally recognizing how federal and provincial institutions have controlled our children. New legislation affirms the rights of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples to exercise jurisdiction over child and family services and establishes national principles such as cultural continuity and substantive equality.

You build capacity around Cree language literacy in both university and community settings. Has Catholic Mass ever been said in Cree, and is a thoroughly Cree Catholic Church a realistic hope?

Only once have we found a priest who said Mass in Cree. There are few clergy who value our language enough to learn it. But the Squamish in Vancouver just had a first Mass in their language [in September 2021]. I hope the pope will direct his Canadian

bishops to take seriously using our language in Catholic ceremonies. We have the resource people and the language experts to make that happen.

We carry so many colonized beliefs that don't serve us well, which go against the worldviews of our ancestors. We are doing a lot of soul-searching and mapping Cree concepts and laws. Deconstructing colonialism is such necessary work, and you need to be discriminating: "This I keep, that I throw out." You have to be hard-nosed, and this is a long-term, intergenerational project in our community. Nothing from our ancestors should be discarded just because someone from outside says "you should not do that." Some Indigenous people in the U.S. are further along that journey.

We are currently trying to find resources to build a space where our knowledge keepers can dialogue, share, develop, and archive their stories and wisdom so that we can leave a legacy for our grandchildren. That's something my generation didn't have. We had to scrounge around and travel many miles to find little kernels because some of our elders did not want to share their knowledge for fear of punishment or misappropriation.

What would it mean to you personally for Pope Francis to offer, on First Nations lands, an apology to residential school survivors and families in Canada?

Pope Francis comes to Canada as a pilgrim and is scheduled to meet Indigenous peoples on their land reserved from Turtle Island by treaties. This action offers two things for me: It affirms my beliefs and my work in the process of reconciliation for the past 65 years, and it gives me great hope that my grandchildren will have an opportunity to believe in the message of Jesus Christ from the context of their Cree worldview.

I have an interest in the Lakota spiritual leader (and Catholic) Black Elk. There is something about his life that makes me think of the prophet Isaiah. The church needs to listen to Black Elk's wisdom and life experiences, just as Jesus told his disciples to listen to the voice of their prophets (Luke 24:27, 44). I believe reconciliation will arise in part from turning attention to the holy people of our land. ❖

Elaine Enns and **Ched Myers** direct Bartimaeus Cooperative Ministries in Oak View, Calif., and are the authors of *Healing Haunted Histories: A Settler Discipleship of Decolonization*.



INVITE **REV. ADAM TAYLOR** TO SPEAK.



Ed M. Kozlarski for Sojourners

Rev. Adam Russell Taylor is president of Sojourners and author of ***A More Perfect Union: A New Vision for Building the Beloved Community***. He is a recognized leader in building faith-inspired social movements and addressing issues of faith, race, justice, and peace as well as working for global human rights, economic justice, and building a multiracial democracy. Invite Adam to speak to your congregation, convention, or classroom today at sojo.net/AdamSpeak.

Virtual options available.

SOJOURNERS
SojoAction

TELL ME, WHERE DO YOU LIVE? HOW CAN YOU NOT KNOW ALL THE THINGS YOU DO NOT KNOW?

By Jamie McGhee and Adam Hollowell

Theater





In 1958, Greek American film and theater director Elia Kazan asked James Baldwin to write a play. Specifically, Kazan recommended that he write a script based on the 1955 murder of Emmett Till in Money, Miss. The result was “Blues for Mister Charlie,” a play that proved to be one of the most intimate, gut-wrenching, and emotionally exhausting experiences of Baldwin’s artistic life.

As Baldwin worked on the script during the summer of 1963, he received the crushing news that his friend Medgar Evers had been killed. Evers was a civil rights activist and U.S. Army veteran who served as Mississippi state field secretary for the NAACP. Baldwin deeply admired Evers and later wrote, “When he died, something entered into me which I cannot describe, but it was then that I resolved that nothing under heaven would prevent me from getting this play done.” “Blues for Mister Charlie” opened at the Actors Studio in New York in April of the following year, 1964.

The play opens with the murder of Richard, a young Black boy in a small Southern town, which closely resembles Till’s murder. There is no suspense: Lyle Britten, the white owner of the local general store, has shot Richard and dumped his body outside of town. The grieving family includes Rev. Meridian Henry, Richard’s father and the nonviolent leader of the local Black church; Meridian’s mother (and Richard’s grandmother), Mother Henry; and Juanita, a young Black student who loved Richard. Parnell James, the white liberal editor of a local newspaper, tries to appease all parties, unsuccessfully.

**“PEOPLE WHO SHUT
THEIR EYES TO
REALITY SIMPLY
INVITE THEIR OWN
DESTRUCTION,”
JAMES BALDWIN
WROTE.**

Each character in “Blues for Mister Charlie” is forced to think about where they stand, what they see, and who matters. For instance, Meridian confronts Parnell for being complicit with Lyle in the systems of white violence and white legal impunity. Meridian says,

I watched you all [Parnell and Lyle] all this week up at the Police Chief’s office with me ... And for both of you—I watched this, I never watched it before—it was just a Black boy that was dead, and that was a problem. He saw the problem one way, you saw it another way. But it wasn’t a man that was dead, not my son—you held yourselves away from that!

Lyle thinks that Richard’s death is a legal problem and aims to escape punishment for his crime. Parnell thinks Richard’s death is a social problem and tries to hold together the Black and white members of the community to avoid further violence. Meridian insists that Richard is a person, not a problem. His response is intimate and visceral: “My son!”

Baldwin’s fictional characters often reckon with their place in the world. Meridian, Lyle, and Parnell each calculate their history, position, and status in a society that unequally distributes life and death, health and wealth, beauty and grace. Baldwin turns this reckoning on his readers, too. “People who shut their eyes to reality simply invite their own destruction,” he wrote.

Baldwin is asking us this question: In a world of white violence and Black death, what do you see?

Near the end of Act II in “Blues for Mister Charlie,” Parnell arrives at the church to find Juanita, a young Black student grieving Richard’s death. Parnell realizes, belatedly, that Juanita and Richard were in love:

Parnell: You loved him.

Juanita: Yes.

Parnell: I didn’t know.

Juanita: Ah, you’re so lucky, Parnell. I know you didn’t know. *cont’d on page 45*

LEARNING TO LIVE WITH MEN

By Abby Olcese

When reviewing films, especially from a faith-based angle, it's natural to look for concrete messages. Most mainstream films tell three-act stories, and those typically include a tidy resolution that presents a perspective or moral. But film is also an art form, and great art is more interested in creating atmosphere and asking questions than providing answers—not unlike faith, which teaches us to pose unanswerable questions and to sit with uncertainty.

For those who like tidy narratives, filmmaker Alex Garland's work can be frustrating. Garland's films are concerned with big concepts, many related to the characters' desire for control at the expense of their humanity and others' lives. However, his films rarely answer the questions they pose, leaving room for viewer interpretation. For audiences willing to engage with art that lives in an in-between place, this can be a thrilling, sometimes visceral, experience.

Garland's latest film, *Men*, is his most tonally upsetting and his most abstruse. In it, Harper (Jessie Buckley) rents a country manor as a space to emotionally recover from the violent death—a possible suicide—of her husband, James (Paapa Essiedu). Her idyllic solitude is disrupted by a series of men (all played by Rory Kinnear) who threaten her emotionally, psychologically, and physically. The men appear in various forms, including a patronizing older man, a vulgar child, a manipulative vicar, a macho policeman, and a naked, silent stalker.

The concept itself is clear; *Men* is about the act of male intrusion on the lives of women. But it's the way the movie communicates the theme that creates questions Garland would rather ask than answer. *Men* is awash in religious imagery, both biblical and pagan, from Harper eating an apple from the garden on her arrival to the repeated motif of the Green Man (a common image in British folklore) throughout the village where she stays. For the most part, these images are meant to evoke a sense of something primal and punishing.

That tone gives *Men* its effect, generating an uncomfortable emotional echo of the fear many women feel in a patriarchal society. There is no truly safe place for Harper, no emotional refuge that can't be weaponized against her. It's not enough, of course, to state that a problem exists when half the world's population is intimately aware of it. It is, however, undeniably powerful to create a sense of fear and make the audience sit in ambiguity that resembles real life. Right now, our lives seem to be all about sitting with painful, tangled questions. It makes sense that our art should be, too. ❖

Abby Olcese (@abbyolcese) is a freelance film critic and writer based in Missouri.

From *Men*

THE FUTURE FIGHT

Youth v Gov, currently streaming on Netflix, follows the 21 American young people suing the U.S. government for creating the climate crisis and failing to act to protect their constitutional right to life, liberty, personal safety, and property.

Barrelmaker Productions



A Dairy Alliance

Approximately 80 percent of employees on western Wisconsin dairy farms are undocumented. In *Milked*, Ruth Conniff explores how these migrants and their white employers, some of whom helped elect Donald Trump in 2016, have come together over the global economic forces that impact them all.

The New Press



Celebrity Worship

Journalist Katelyn Beaty explores how evangelical culture has propped up celebrity gurus over institutions in *Celebrities for Jesus: How Personas, Platforms, and Profits Are Hurting the Church*. Beaty points a way toward a new faithfulness of accountability and humility.

Brazos Press

WHAT SONG SHOULD WE SING FOR THE DEAD?

By Julie Polter



Tell It Slant

Numbness is good for dental work and as a temporary coping skill in surviving direct traumas. But most of us are not survivors of tornados or wildfires, haven't lost our loved one to a young

man with an assault rifle, nor worked triple ICU shifts at the peak of the pandemic. Yet many of us, myself included, hunker down deeper into whatever task is at hand when another breaking news bulletin about a mass shooting pops up on our phone. We barely glance at the latest tally of U.S. COVID-19 deaths or reports on war and natural disaster.

A few things recently have cracked open my numbness and made me wonder if we owe it to the dead and the grieving to let our hearts break.

I first saw the photo of a child-sized casket decorated with princess pink and a TikTok logo in a story shared on Instagram. Trey Ganem, a man who has a business creating custom caskets, had donated his work to the grieving families in Uvalde, Texas, where 19 children and two teachers were killed in their school by an 18-year-old with an assault rifle. Ganem sat with parents and asked about their children. Then he and his team made designs reflecting the delights and obsessions of typical childhoods: TikTok. Spider-Man. Softball. Whales for the girl who dreamed of becoming a marine biologist. The colors were bright and glossy; the caskets' handles and trims were lovingly painted to match.

In the past I might have pondered the prevalence of commercialism in both American childhood and the funeral industry, or the cultural history of how we grieve. But this was only days after the Uvalde shooting, and the juxtaposition of

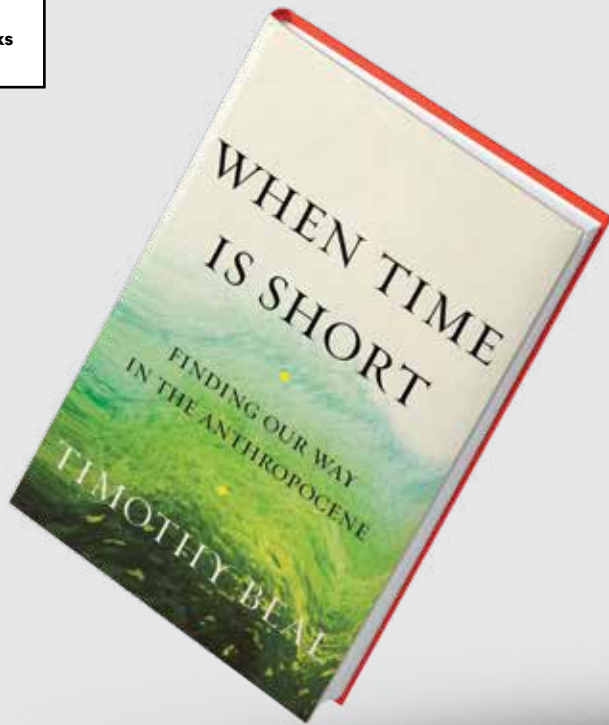
I WEPT AT A STRANGER'S HEARTFELT ATTEMPT TO BRING SOLACE TO THE INCONSOLABLE.

cheerful designs on obscenely small caskets brought a rush of feeling: I wept at a stranger's heartfelt attempt to bring solace to the inconsolable. I was deeply agitated that we are a country where slaughtered kids are sent to their graves in candy-colored caskets while politicians and weapons manufacturers rake in power and profit.

Just the week before, a very different creative work cracked my reserve: *The New York Times*' interactive presentation of 13 final text messages from people who died of COVID between March 2020 and January 2022, created in part to mark the official surpassing of 1 million COVID deaths in the U.S. As you scroll, you see the brief text interchanges unfold—worry, hope, love, then ... no answer. Between the interchanges, a counter tracks the growing death count as the months go by. In her introduction to the presentation, *Times* opinion writer Alicia P.Q. Wittmeyer said many readers submitted final text exchanges to memorialize their loved ones. But "many said they also hoped their messages could make the pandemic feel real, in what seems like its waning days, for those who hadn't experienced its toll up close."

I am one step removed from tragedy. I don't claim the depth of grief of those who mourn. But it's not healthy to feel nothing or to push all grief away. From the biblical prophets to the book of Lamentations and the psalms, righteous rage and public grief are powerful in our faith. Lamentation and rage spawned March for Our Lives ("Created by survivors, so you don't have to be one."), Sandy Hook Promise, and dozens of other political and social movements over the centuries. They have inspired art, both low and high. They offer us, the living, ways to honor the dead. ✱

Julie Polter is managing editor of *Sojourners* magazine.



**WE ARE OF EARTH
AND TO EARTH
WE WILL RETURN.**

Beal, a religion professor and Hebrew Bible scholar, argues that our denial of death is in large part rooted in a particular (mis)reading of Genesis 1. There, humans are given dominion over creation and named as exceptional creatures in God's own image. That exceptionalism, read through Enlightenment thinkers such as Francis Bacon and John Locke, became what Bacon called the "charter of foundation" of the colonialist project. Unprecedented exploitation and extraction followed. Indigenous cultures were uprooted from the land because Locke and others believed they had "forfeited by not fully subduing and maximally using its natural resources."

Working from Stuart Brand's famous statement that "We are as gods and might as well get used it," Beal traces human exceptionalism from believing that we are *like* gods to the wildest dreams of a trans-human future in which we *are* gods.

The problem comes when we run against the ground of reality, the literal soil to which we will return. Beal draws on the seminal book *The Denial of Death*, by Ernest Becker. Becker explained our denial as the conflict between our divine consciousness and animal bodies. We are "gods with anuses" who know that we will die and rot. So, we in the techno-capitalist world take on "immortality projects" to help us look away,

whether it's nationalist wars or hope in the latest innovation. Beal borrows from Becker's vision to understand our broader denial of the "potential for human extinction." If instead we recognize that our time is short, we can live into what Beal calls a "palliative hope." Like hospice care, this calls us to focus on what ultimately matters—the truth about who we are.

Beal offers a humbler vision of the human station, more in line with the worldview of many Indigenous cultures, including those of the Bible. Drawing on Genesis 2 as a counterbalance to Genesis 1, he explores a variety of Hebrew Bible texts to argue for an "earth creatureliness" that accepts that we are not gods but *humus* beings, "literally, inspired mud, animate soil." We are of earth and to earth we will return.

Beal's book is a critical contribution to the conversation we must have as ecological disasters surround us. It is not a book of acquiescence but a humble call to live and act on a properly human, creaturely scale. Time is short: We must stop pretending and begin becoming the *humus* beings we were always made to be. ✕

Ragan Sutterfield is an Episcopal priest in his native Arkansas. He writes regularly at thewayweppractice.com.

THE HUMILITY OF ACCEPTANCE

When Time Is Short:
Finding Our Way
in the Anthropocene,
by Timothy Beal

Beacon Press

In 2019, *The New Yorker* published an essay by Jonathan Franzen titled "What if We Stopped Pretending?" Franzen's premise was simple—climate change is here, and no power or populace is making the sacrifices to stop it. His essay was met with an outcry that it is not too late, but since then that consensus has eroded. Bill Gates may still write books like *How to Avoid a Climate Disaster*, but the people who were doing that work while Gates was making his billions have come to darker conclusions.

Timothy Beal's new book, *When Time Is Short: Finding Our Way in the Anthropocene*, is, as he states in the introduction, a "what if it's already too late?" book. That we have a hard time accepting this possibility, Beal believes, is rooted in "our denial of the mortality of our species." Those of us formed in an Enlightenment-capitalist frame simply can't imagine the world without us. And that lack of imagination is one source of the very systems of exploitation and extraction that brought us to this point.

A CONSTRUCTIVE VIEW OF REPARATIONS

Reconsidering Reparations,
by Olufémi O. Táíwò

Oxford University Press



In a former job, I traveled to farms scattered around the world searching for coffee beans to make espresso drinks for Western consumption. I became intimately aware of the complex origins of something as seemingly simple as a cup of coffee and witnessed firsthand the currents of a worldwide distribution system that transfers surplus value from the

Global South to the Global North.

In *Reconsidering Reparations*, Olufémi Táíwò, an assistant professor of philosophy at Georgetown University, describes the history of this system and how it contextualizes discussion of reparations. Colonialism and trans-Atlantic slavery, what he terms the “global racial empire,” created the world and the complex web of social and economic relations we inhabit today. This system has resulted in an accumulation of safety, education, food, health care, and opportunity in Western countries and insecurity and precarity in the Global South. Táíwò argues this history is “not simply a point of comparison to the present. It is a way to map the currents that engulf us in the present.”

Unsurprisingly, these currents extend to the vulnerabilities occasioned by climate change. The metrics most equated with human flourishing—life expectancy, maternal mortality rates, dietary adequacy, literacy rates, sanitation accessibility, and “government effectiveness” (civil liberties, political rights, and governing accountability)—are *significantly* worsened by a country’s history of colonization and intensified by climate change. Climate justice and racial justice turn out to be the same project, in response to the same political history of global racial empire.

Enslaved people, abolitionists, and allies alike have demanded reparations since at least the 1700s. These have culminated in a conversation between two perspectives, which Táíwò terms the “harm-repair” and “relationship-repair” arguments. The harm-repair view benefits from the legal precedent of restoring harms, such as a workplace injury, through the framework of “before and after.” However, it is ultimately incapable of accounting for the magnitude of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

In contrast, the relationship-repair model concentrates on the moral wrongdoings of global racial empire with a target of restoring relationships. Reparations become formal acts of moral repentance. However, by centering the moral wrongs of slavery and colonialism—which are gargantuan—this view frequently fails to account for the *material* and *structural* deprivation they caused.

Táíwò instead argues for what he calls a constructive view of reparations, which is not primarily concerned with restitution or reconciliation *within* our current global system. He refuses to accept the starting point of reparations as integration into the burning house of global racial empire, arguing that achieving racial and climate justice will require building a different world and different web of relationships.

Táíwò does not pretend to give us a construction manual but rather a destination, a road map, and a playlist of ancestors who have struggled before us. The fruits of Táíwò’s project extend like tree branches, generating questions of Indigenous self-determination, the importance of history and temporality for radical struggle, the capitalist system of exploitative and extractive growth centered on infinite accumulation, and the complications of assessing strict group responsibility alongside our collective liability.

Reconsidering Reparations deserves deep engagement from students, scholars, and activists alike. History is of our making, which means we can and must change it. ♦

Samuel Stephens, a chaplain resident at Penn Medicine Princeton Medical Center, holds an M.Div. from Princeton Theological Seminary.



cont'd from page 40 Tell me, where do you live, Parnell? How can you not know all the things you do not know? Parnell: Why are you hitting out at me? I never thought you cared that much about me. But—oh, Juanita! There are so many things I've never been able to say! Juanita: There are so many things you've never been able to hear.

Juanita describes Parnell's ignorance with biting irony: "Ah, you're so lucky, Parnell." Her words question his integrity and announce judgment on his unknowing.

Parnell fails to understand his place in the community because he has not engaged openly and vulnerably with the people around him. This is why Juanita's question is so damning in its simplicity: "Tell me, where do you live, Parnell?" she asks. If you cannot be here, she seems to be saying, you cannot be anywhere.

Baldwin links integrity of the body and integrity of the heart in this scene. He suggests that we cannot understand the world around us without fully embracing our senses: seeing, hearing, touching, and feeling the bodies of the people who are most threatened by violence and cruelty. But senses are not sufficient. Parnell sees Juanita, speaks with her, and touches her, but he holds something back. His integrity fails not because his body lacks function but because his heart lacks courage.

Baldwin is calling us to be present to ourselves and the world around us. He is asking what we know, how we know it, and whether we have the courage to confront the answers.

Juanita's question for Parnell becomes Baldwin's question for us:

Tell me, where do you live? ❖

Jamie McGhee is a novelist, playwright, and essayist. With ties to the eastern U.S., she is now based in Berlin, Germany. **Adam Hollowell** teaches ethics and inequality studies at Duke University, where he directs the Global Inequality Research Initiative at the Samuel DuBois Cook Center on Social Equity. This article excerpted with permission from *You Mean It or You Don't: James Baldwin's Radical Challenge*, 2022 Broadleaf Books.

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY DEGREE

Application Deadline: Sept 1

Advanced Practice of Ministry
Black Church Studies
Pastoral Care & Counseling

LOUISVILLE SEMINARY

lpts.edu/sojourners

- Master of Divinity
- Master of Arts (Religion)
- Master of Arts in Marriage & Family Therapy

100% Tuition Scholarships for Master Level Students

SCAN TO LEARN MORE!

LOUISVILLE PRESBYTERIAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
1344 Alta Vista Road, Louisville, KY 40245 (502) 485-3311



Partner with us!



The Summer Service Leadership Grant is offered to organizations and churches of color for mentoring young adults of color.

MCC needs organizations like yours to encourage and strengthen these young leaders' capacity for leadership, peace-building, service and community engagement.

Call Abby Endashaw at **720.500.3413** or visit mcc.org/summer to learn more.

PEERLESS

By James Dewey

"Can a woman forget her sucking child...?"—Isaiah 49:15

Mary eyed her little survivor tightly
 as he nursed and teethed, then crawl-step-jumping
 taught Egyptian games to Nazareth boys

Joseph noticed his ears
 how they filled like cups
 how they thrilled at the sounds of the synagogue
 sifting words that fell from dry scrolls
 drifting

temple doctors muttered
 shaking their heads
he speaks like a man

astonishing man!
 mobs flocked to crossroads, pushing
 their children forward, pleading:

he swooped them up in sweaty arms
 put calloused hands in their greasy hair
 and blessed each bleating one
 gently

mothers from Bethlehem listened intently
 to thirty-three-year-old Innocence
 in each other's nodding ears they whispered
that's how old our babies would have been
our babies would have been
that's how old
our babes
our little lambs



James Dewey is from Boise, Idaho, and lives in Bogotá, Colombia. His poetry has appeared in *Irreantum*, *Inscape*, *Perspectives*, and *Reformed Journal*.

JOIN THE GLOBAL LEARNING COMMUNITY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE LEADERS

Master's and Graduate Certificate Programs in:

- Restorative Justice
- Conflict Transformation
- Transformational Leadership

Scholarships available
Study online or on campus

CHANGE THE WORLD: START WITH YOURS



Learn more at:
emu.edu/sojocjp



WHO SITS AT YOUR TABLE?

Scripture passages are
from the Revised Common
Lectionary, Cycle C

By T. Denise Anderson



Living the Word

You, faithful church workers, have survived the demands of Lent, Holy Week, Easter, and Pentecost, and I'm willing to wager you are tired. By this time in the liturgical cycle, I'm usually

exhausted and my spiritual (and sometimes physical) walk includes a pronounced limp. Vocational and social demands have taken their toll, not to mention the profound collective trauma we have all been through. Two years ago this summer, the waves of direct action in response to the police killings of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd left many of us particularly drained. And the shootings have not stopped. We have all done and been through so much.

Throughout the New Testament, the text refers to faith using the Greek word *pistis*. That word can also translate as faithfulness, a dogged determination that refuses to acquiesce or let anyone stifle it. It's the same faith exercised by the woman with the flow of blood and shown in the litany of ancestors in Hebrews 11. It is more than sentimental, and sometimes is best exercised by simply being still and remembering who God is.

Our scriptures this month encourage us to exercise and examine our faith so that we keep going forward, even if we must stop and reset ourselves. Whether our posture is active or passive, our faith is still called into action because the world needs our witness.

T. Denise Anderson is acting director of Racial Equity and Women's Intercultural Ministries at the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

"THE OPPOSITE OF FAITH IS NOT DOUBT, BUT CERTAINTY."

AUGUST 7

BLESS THIS HOME

ISAIAH 1:1, 10-20; PSALM 50:1-8, 22-23;
HEBREWS 11:1-3, 8-16; LUKE 12:32-40

As a third-culture kid (who grew up in places outside my parents' homeland), I have a different relationship with the concept of "home" than most people I know. Because we moved around so much, I don't have any current connections to the places I was raised. Because I've often not had the benefit of family nearby, "home" has always been about creating community wherever I've found myself.

The writer of Hebrews raised Abraham as an example to encourage the faithful to hold onto God's promises and trust in God's character. He left his home and everything he knew for a divine promise that was not immediately realized. When he became impatient with the fact that he had not yet become a father as promised, God assured him that as numerous as the stars are in the sky, "so shall your descendants be." That was enough, apparently, to strengthen Abraham's faith, and he was called "righteous" for it.

In our gospel text, Jesus reminds his hearers that our treasure is where the heart is, but that is not a passive notion. We can choose where to place our hearts and make our investments. If I put a lot of money into a car, I'm likely to keep the oil changed, tires rotated, and interiors detailed. If I put my treasure into the poor, I'm going to care that they are attended to and their voices heard. I'm going to care about systemic inequality that keeps people in poverty. I'm going to invest my time not only in ensuring that my neighbors have their immediate needs met but also in dismantling those systems that keep people chronically poor. Whatever I invest in is where I've elected to "live," so I had best choose wisely!

Abraham was invested in staying with God because he had left much behind to follow God's call. What have we left behind? What are we prepared to leave behind?

AUGUST 14

SHAKE THE FEAR OUT

ISAIAH 5:1-7; PSALM 80:1-2, 8-19;
HEBREWS 11:29 - 12:2; LUKE 12:49-56

When I read texts such as Isaiah 5 that pronounce God's disappointment and judgment, I reflect on what causes humanity to move so far from God's intentions for us. My guess is that fear is at the root of it. When called toward a higher standard of living with each other, fear of what we may lose often keeps us from doing so. When called to speak truth to unjust power, fear of how that power might be wielded against us may stop us before we get started. Examples of the immobilizing effects of fear are numerous in scripture, and our lived experiences offer even more.

In Luke's gospel, Jesus reminds his hearers that his message is naturally divisive and, if heeded, will revolutionize every aspect of our lives. As we have seen before, such extensive change can generate fear. But fear doesn't have to drain us of all agency. The writer of Hebrews speaks to a Jewish Christian community that was likely shut out of synagogue life because of their belief in Jesus as Messiah, while persecuted by a Roman Empire that was not fond of either Jews or Christians. Because of the threats around them, this community was considering leaving the faith. They were reminded, however, of the faith and steadfastness of their forebears who faced similar threats. It was by faith that their ancestors escaped slavery in Egypt. Faith saved Rahab, Gideon, Samuel, David, and others. It is hard to imagine that fear wasn't present with them all.

Reflecting on his activism, Nelson Mandela said, "I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it." We too must find ways through fear, even when we cannot dispel it.

AUGUST 21

A MESSY FAITH

JEREMIAH 1:4-10; PSALM 71:1-6;
HEBREWS 12:18-29; LUKE 13:10-17

In her book *Plan B: Further Thoughts on Faith*, Anne Lamott riffed on Paul Tillich: "The opposite of faith is not doubt, but certainty." She added, "Faith includes noticing the mess, the emptiness and

discomfort, and letting it be there until some light returns." We may arrive at certainty by empirical evidence or pure stubbornness, but our need for certainty is often at odds with our call to have and exercise faith. Faith dies when there are no longer questions we must ask of God or ourselves. It is through our questions that we grope for (and eventually find) God. Jeremiah's call story shows a young man who is certain that God could *not* be calling him—a young, inexperienced person—to be the mouthpiece of God to the land of Judah. Most people might have agreed. God, however, did not.

In Luke 13, Jesus takes to task the synagogue leader over his doctrinal certainty about the Sabbath, a certainty that would rather have a woman remain injured and quiet than whole and praising aloud about her healing. Even the writer of Hebrews seeks to manage the reader's expectations, acknowledging the signs and wonders that were already familiar to the community but inviting them to embrace new ones and to not rebuff the message simply because it is not as familiar. The one warning from heaven carries even more gravitas than the one warning from Earth (see Hebrews 12:25).

**FEAR DOESN'T
HAVE TO DRAIN US
OF ALL AGENCY.**

AUGUST 28

WHERE IS THE LORD?

JEREMIAH 2:4-13; PSALM 81:1, 10-16;
HEBREWS 13:1-8, 15-16; LUKE 14:1, 7-14

This day will mark the 59th anniversary of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. In his iconic speech that day, Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. reminded America of its unfortunate failure to stand where the Lord stands. King said that, when it comes to people of color, the United States had defaulted on a "promissory note" that "guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Today we have an opportunity to discern if we have gotten any closer to being on God's side.

In the gospel, again we meet Jesus on the Sabbath. This time he is at a Sabbath dinner where he is watched closely by those in attendance. He notices how they took for themselves the seats of honor at the dinner table. He gave them an opportunity to consider their actions. If they are socially correct, are they also morally so? Are they up to the standard God sets? It's perfectly acceptable to have a dinner party for friends, but wouldn't God want us instead to have a dinner party for the poor and vulnerable disabled?

When Jeremiah was called to the prophetic ministry, the Lord's indictment of Israel was that the people had stopped asking "Where is the Lord?" They instead had chosen other gods and other standards. They had forsaken the living water and dug for themselves cracked cisterns that held no water. They had neglected the things that truly give life. All of this could have been avoided had they been in the practice of asking themselves "Where is the Lord?"

Where stands the Lord? As the South African church's Belhar Confession states, the Lord stands "against injustice and with the wronged." A people who fail to engage in serious and regular self-examination run the risk of losing proximity to the Divine. ✱

"Preaching the Word," Sojourners' online resource for sermon preparation and Bible study, is available at sojo.net/ptw.

H'rumps



PSALMS FOR TODAY (NSFW)

By Jenna Barnett

In her recent article “Praying the Imprecatory Psalms Is an Act of Non-violence,” Liz Cooledge Jenkins explains that the imprecatory psalms of the Hebrew Bible “demand that God exact judgment against evildoers.” These psalms are particularly ... colorful. Take Psalm 35, for example:

Let ruin come on them unawares.
And let the net that they hid ensnare them;
let them fall in it—to their ruin.

In comparison to other imprecatory psalms, the above is fairly sanitized. Often in these verses, the psalmist calls for teeth-breaking, infant murder, and widow-making. To be honest, I’ve struggled to read them. My privileged life has left me with few enemies worth cursing and scant violence to avenge. But I realize that many people of faith—especially those living under oppression’s boot—may find a certain catharsis in these psalms as they imagine God judging the truly hurtful people and powers of the world. “In praying these psalms,” writes Cooledge Jenkins, “we process our rage and give our violent impulses over to God.” One problem, though: The curses in the imprecatory psalms are a bit dated and unrelatable. I’ve gone to the trouble of updating them for modernity.

O LORD, STEER THE KARTS OF THE GAMERGATE BROS INTO A BANANA PEEL, CAUSING THEM TO SWIRL OFF THE EDGE OF RAINBOW ROAD.

For your consideration:

Psalm 1

O Lord, may the iPhone of the slumlord in Crown Heights fall into a toilet of his own urine. May a single AirPods follow quickly behind.

Psalm 2

Seize the yachts of the Russian oligarchs, O God. Scatter their boats across the globe like yellow and blue glitter at a drag bar. Make of them safe vessels for the refugees of the world until we live in a world with no refugees.

Psalm 3

Bash the Xboxes and PlayStations of the Gamergate bros. Leave them only with a GameCube circa 2004. Steer their karts into a banana peel, causing them to swirl off the edge of Rainbow Road. Send forth Ms. Pac-Woman to eat them up like a tiny pellet in a maze of their own misogyny.

Psalm 4

When a billionaire tries to find a tax loophole, push them into a manhole (person-hole?) where they will be greeted by one of your prophets: Donatello, the Ninja Turtle. Force them to hand-feed Donatello pizza while he reads them the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus until their hearts are softened and their riches dispersed.

Psalm 5

Creative, vengeful God, demilitarize the police, and do it with style. Turn their M16 rifles into pep-rally T-shirt cannons that exclusively fire off Lil Nas X merch. Take their tanks to the old town road where they’ll ride ‘til they can’t no more. ✖

Jenna Barnett is associate culture editor, sojo.net.



**YES,
CLIMATE
CHANGE
IS REAL.**

JUST DONATE ALREADY.

FIGHT CLIMATE INJUSTICE NOW.



Find out more at:
worldrenew.net/sojo



IT'S MORE THAN A CAREER... **IT'S YOUR CALLING**



**Up to 100% tuition
scholarships available**

Study online or on campus

**Electives in peacebuilding
and restorative justice**

**Learn together with students
and faculty from multiple
denominations**

**Approved by the United
Methodist Church to train
candidates for ordination**

SEMINARY + MORE: A DEGREE THAT IS UNIQUELY YOU



Learn more at:
emu.edu/sojo

